

THE . .
ALABASTER
BOX. ~

Walter Besant.



108 ed

The Glebe House,
Hunstanton, R.S.O.

W. & A. GILSON
LONDON

Am. Barber
1902.

216

W. H. & C. S. W.

LONDON

THE
ALABASTER BOX

BY
WALTER BESANT

London
THOMAS BURLEIGH

1900



BARNICOTT AND PEARCE
PRINTERS

TO
THE REV. CANON BARNETT
OF
TOYNBEE HALL AND ST. JUDE'S
WITH
THE AUTHOR'S GREAT RESPECT.

April, 1900.

CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
PROLOGUE—THE SECRET OF SUCCESS	I
I. THE SITUATION	17
II. THE EVENING	29
III. SUNDAY	40
IV. THE MORNING	57
V. CHILDE ROBERT	67
VI. THE IMPENITENT	72
VII. THE DROPPED HAND	83
VIII. THE LOST SYMBOL	93
IX. THE BOYS' CLUB	104
X. GLORY	112
XI. BEFORE THE BEAK	119
XII. MORE LIGHT	132
XIII. RESPONSIBILITIES	146
XIV. THE HOOLIGANS	160
XV. HIS COUSINS	176
XVI. HIS UNCLE	183
XVII. AT THE SIGN OF THE SYMBOL	195
XVIII. RECOGNITION	201
XIX. CONFESSION AND CONFESSOR	221
XX. PICCADILLY	230
XXI. THE CHAPTER	242



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

THE ALABASTER BOX.

PROLOGUE.

THE SECRET OF SUCCESS.

"I THOUGHT you would be surprised, my dear boy!" With these words he concluded a communication which had been brief but startling. And his manner was aggressive—even defiant.

"Yes," his son replied, "I have . . . I confess . . . been surprised. I have never, in fact, in all my life, been so much . . . surprised."

He spoke slowly, and, since words may sometimes enlarge their meanings with the manner of utterance, anyone might have thought that the surprise included disgust.

The two were sitting in a dining-room, and it was after dinner. One of them was a man of sixty-five or perhaps seventy; the other was a young man of twenty-five. The elder man sat in one of those chairs invented for persons afflicted with paralysis, and provided with wheels which the patient can if he pleases use by himself. The

decanters stood on the table, and the old man helped himself to a glass of port.

"I expected as much," he said, looking curiously at his son. His eyes were keen and bright, of a hard deep blue ; they looked out from under heavy black eyebrows ; his hair was still black but shot with grey, the kind of grey which never increases ; his beard was black but also touched with grey. His figure was tall and lean ; his face was hard : every feature was hard, especially the firm and straight mouth and the square chin ; his head was large, and his forehead was square like his chin.

Nature intended this man for an eagle ; if a sculptor were to mould that face, he would instinctively give it such a line here, such a depression there, as would realise the intention of Nature ; it is the privilege of the sculptor so to interpret Nature. The conditions of life, the pressure of fate and fortune, the calling or profession, the habitual attitude of the mind, had in this case turned the eagle into the vulture. With men such transformations are always possible. No force of circumstances can turn the swan into a goose, or the thrush into a cuckoo ; yet with man the conditions of his life have this power.

"I meant to surprise you," he said in a hard voice, still observing curiously how his son took the revelation of the past.

But the son made no reply. The father went on, justifying himself :

“Why should I have to keep the secret to myself? You share the fortune—why should not you also know how it came? In a little while it will be all yours. I had to make it—I made it out of nothing. You have to enjoy it. The least you can do for your part is to understand what it means. Let us have and keep our little secret to ourselves.”

The young man rose slowly and stood before the fireplace, but not for warmth. It was an evening in June when the soft twilight was just beginning to fall upon the lawns and flower-beds of the garden outside, and within the room there were dark shadows creeping stealthily in corners and lurking between windows. He was tall in stature like his father, but not so thin; his face had as yet nothing in it either of the eagle or the vulture; it was a face with regular features, a handsome face: a face which might become as hard as his father's, but would certainly look better if it developed in a softer direction; his lips were firm, and his chin full. He looked like a man capable of purpose and resolution: he might possibly become obstinate; he would certainly be tenacious. He had his father's black hair and dark blue eyes and his firm lips, but his chin and his forehead were not so square. At

this moment he was flushed ; he was confused ; he appeared like a culprit who has been found out ; he was really shamed through and through by a sudden and most unexpected revelation. He stood with hanging head and averted eyes, playing, as one in great mental trouble, with the trifles on the mantelshelf.

"Then," he said, "the story of our Australian inheritance was a fable." He spoke huskily, and without lifting his eyes. "An invention and a fable." He shuddered ; it was like walking over his own grave—the grave in which all his past would have to be buried, and that while he himself was still living—a horrible fate !

"Every word of it," replied his father, cheerfully.

"And the story of your education abroad, and your retired life, and the loss of all your relations"

"Every single word of it, my dear boy. Fables and lies ! Fables and lies !"

"And all your money and all this luxury—and my position ?"

"All got in the same way," with exasperating cheerfulness. "All in the same way. Money-lending did it. Sixty per cent. and the letter of the bond."

The son groaned aloud. Consider. If you had been brought up in a house full of things

rich and beautiful ; if you had seen evidence from childhood of material ease and wealth ; if you had heard traditions of family estates ; of Australian cousins leaving large possessions : if you had gone to a public school as the son and heir of a wealthy gentleman of good family : if you had been sent to the University with a handsome allowance to keep up that position : if you had been taught, from the beginning, to despise the lower ways and walks : if you had grown up in the belief that you were one of that class which in England still continues to think itself entitled to take the command—with what emotions would you receive the intelligence that the whole fabric was built upon the most despised of all callings—that of money-lender ?

“I always meant to tell you some time or other,” the father went on. “I wanted you to be finished first. As I don’t suppose that anybody knows the truth except you and me, it can remain a little secret to ourselves.” The son sat down and turned away his face. “No change need be made, my dear boy. Only that you will understand from your own history the great truth that there are but two kinds of men, the devourer and the devoured. You, for instance, are the son of a devourer.”

He took another glass of port : the wine warmed his thin frame : it stimulated his thoughts and put them into words.

"I began," he went on, lying back in his chair and folding his hands, "in quite a small way. You would hardly believe that I was a little builder ; just a little builder in a poor quarter—builder, plumber, and undertaker." The son shivered visibly. "Undertaker !" he repeated, with a kind of malice, perceiving the effect of the confession. "But I was clever. I discovered that most people cannot calculate, or add up, or see beyond the length of their noses ; they are too stupid to better themselves ; and they cannot discern the chances that are offering themselves all the time. They invite the devourer. I began to devour, Gerald. Yes—oh, yes ! I saw my chances—and I devoured."

Still the son made no reply.

"I will tell you how I began. All round my place were streets filled with tenements—houses which let at ten shillings to fifteen shillings a week, you know, each with two or three or four families in them. Well, I found that I could buy these houses for a song because they were just ready to tumble down. I bought them one by one ; I repaired them myself. When I had got a whole street of ramshackle cottages—they were mortgaged as high as they would go—I made the first lucky bid. I doubled the rents. They cried out upon me, of course—the more you squeeze the louder they cry ; they gave up

the houses, but other people took them. Then I bought more houses. I kept on buying houses and running up the rents. People must live somewhere. Then I had a tidy bit o' money, and I cast about what to do with it. I thought at first of something considerable in the grocer-ing, with a special line—a mustard or a pickle—something to advertise. Then I thought of money-lending. Everybody wants money. Everybody must have money sometimes, for his business : he must, or under he goes. I began to find that money. All the little people, the people that the bank won't look at, came to me. There was the jerry builder with his half-finished carcasses : there was the small shopkeeper with his account due : there was the young fellow beginning his tobacco shop : there was the dressmaker—they all came to me. I was their benefactor when they got the money : when they had to pay it back—I was the grinder and the usurer. Yes ! Then I gave up this little way of business—got clear of everything and went off to the West End. I opened a place in Golden Square and called it a bank—not in my own name, you know. There I sat and there I lived—all by myself for twenty—yes—four and twenty years—ay—ay——”

He was not thinking any more about his son : he was remembering the day of small things and his own wonderful good fortune.

"Money makes money," he said ; "that is true everywhere. The banker lends money : the financier lends money : the solicitor lends money. A man must have a hundred pounds to save him from ruin : the lender gives him that hundred pounds—on conditions. He is quite right to make conditions. He sells his wares in as high a market as he can command—every trader does the same. The borrower is saved from disaster, and he has to pay for the accommodation. I have never been able to understand why money-lending is not considered as honourable a profession as any other. What do you say ?"

His son said nothing.

"A man's got to be hard," he went on with his own apology, "so he must in any trade, if he wants to get on : hard and grasping, and careful over the small things as much as the great, because there's more of them. When you hear that a man has made money you understand that he's a hard man. I was hard—cruel hard—they called me. When I had my tenements the people called me Tenderheart, meaning just the contrary. See, Gerald ?"

"I see."

"If you consider, it's the way of the world all over. Nothing so hard as nature. Fall off a cliff and you'll be smashed. Go into malaria and you'll get diphtheria. There's no pity any-

where. Nature won't give in. The man who wants to succeed must be like Nature. He must never give in. There was never any nonsense about me, no giving in to tears and snivelling. 'There's the bond,' I said. 'Pay up! pay up!' That's the way I got on, Gerald."

"I begin to understand."

"My best client among the whole lot was General Tablett. It seems as if I owe most everything to his noble prodigality."

"My grandfather? Was he a . . . a client of yours?"

"He was. The General was dipped pretty deep when he came to me. But there was meat upon him still, and I had it. He was one of the old school: they're all gone now, I believe. They carried on in the high, cold, aristocratic style, as if money was water. His son, now, was quite of the other school."

"He had a son, then? My mother never told me."

"Of course! The son belonged to a lower set. He went to the bad very early, and went down and disappeared. The General was a gentleman, through and through: he taught me manners"—there was, in fact, the semblance of a certain Castilian bearing, a measured speech, a studied calm about this ex-builder and whilome *croque-mort*.

“And . . . and . . . and my mother?”

“When the General was ruined at last, and nobody would give or lend him anything, I made a proposal to him. I said, ‘Let me marry your daughter, and I’ll give you for the rest of your life—he was past sixty and had as many diseases as he had vices—one for each, I believe—I’ll give you five hundred a year. Moreover, I’ll behave to your daughter as a gentleman. She shall never know what I am : nobody shall know except you and me.’ Well, he accepted. And we so contrived it that your mother never did know. And she never regretted, Gerald. You remember that, always !”

It was a touch—the only touch—of a human heart. The man had loved his wife—to whom he never told the truth.

“And as for what I gave her—look round !”

There was plenty to look upon : the walls were hung with good pictures, the furniture was good, the windows opened upon a noble garden ; beyond the garden was an orchard ; the house was one of the large villas which are found on the outskirts of London, it lay in its grounds hidden from the road by stately trees—it was the house of a rich man. The owner, Mr. Moorsom, was wheeled about his gardens in a chair. He was a widower ; he had no daughters ; the house was silent and empty save for the presence of his

son and the friends he brought home with him. None of the people of the place, a great straggling parish on the north of London, visited him or knew anything about him except by name.

"Look round you," he repeated; "what have I given you as well as your mother?"

"Yes!" Gerald rose and began to walk about the room. "But it's rather sudden. I am afraid—perhaps—do I comprehend the position? Are you—still——?"

"No! I went out of business some years ago. I had had enough of it. The office is closed, the well-known money-lender of Golden Square has vanished; no one knows what has become of him. There isn't much enjoyment of the money for me, but there is some. I reflect upon my success. I believe people think that I am a retired colonial. If you want to be quite retired go to a London suburb. As for the truth—no one will ever know unless you choose to tell him."

"I am to become an accomplice in the . . . the concealment?"

"If you choose to put it that way—yes. My dear boy, consider yourself. You've got your future before you, and you are ambitious. You have done great things at Cambridge; you are my sole heir, and I am worth—well—you shall see. I shall not live for ever, I suppose—" he

spoke, however, doubtfully, as if everything was possible for one who had been otherwise so wonderfully favoured. "Whether I live or die, you can have all the money you want. You have been called to the Bar. You can speak, you can debate, you know a quantity of fine things, you will go into the house and you will rise there. You can rise to anything, you are the grandson of General Tablett, still remembered with respect for the amazing way he kept it up : you are also the son of a wealthy man who lives in retirement : you have manners : you have a good appearance : you have money : you have ability : the world is all before you. Who will ever suspect, or discover, that your father was a small builder, plumber, contractor, and undertaker at first ; afterwards a money-lender with the worst reputation in the world, said to have sold up and ruined hundreds of poor victims ? It is the way with people who ruin themselves to curse the man who helped them on their way."

Gerald sighed and lifted his head.

"That is your line, my son, and a very fine line it is. Only remember," the old man sat up and shook a long and bony forefinger, while his eyebrows contracted and his fierce eyes brightened, "whether you carry on my business, or any other business, whether you want to succeed in any line you take up, you've got to be hard.

You've got to imitate the virtues of your father. Seize your chance the moment it presents itself. Seize it, trample on everybody. As for pity or mercy, don't pretend to it. Trample on your enemies and climb over the heads of your friends. My business was to get rich. I did it. Your business is to become a great man. Do it! Watch for the chances. Climb over the heads of your friends, and trample! — trample! — trample!"

Gerald heard, but said nothing. He was bewildered; he was filled through and through with shame. One thing his father did not fully understand, how the son had been taught in a thousand ways, by his mother, by his school, by his companions and friends, to regard certain forms of money-getting as base and dishonourable to the last degree. He had always been a gentleman, a gentleman in the narrow sense of the word, not the large one; one of the school which believes that it takes three or four generations to make a gentleman, and more to make a gentlewoman, and that all the desirable things in the world belong to gentlemen: the best society, the highest culture, the seats of the mighty, all the dignity, all the authority, all the leading. And now, in this abrupt and unexpected manner, he had learned that none of the things which he had always thought his own belonged to him; he

was arrayed in borrowed feathers ; beneath those splendours was that familiar common object which he had always called the Cad.

"What has become of your own relations?" he asked his father, with another shudder, thinking of the things behind.

"I don't know. There were cousins ; I have never asked what became of them. Down below, where I came from, we don't trouble much about cousins."

"Are there any of your own name? Any who know your—your history?"

"I tell you I know nothing about them. And certainly they know nothing about me. You need not be afraid that any of them will claim cousinship with you."

"It might be awkward . . ."

"Look here, Gerald ! No one can get at you except through me, and they can't get at me anyhow. Nobody knows, I say. You are quite safe."

"Ruined hundreds, ruined hundreds," the words kept dropping about the cells of the young man's brain. "Ruined hundreds."

"Well, Gerald, what are you thinking of?"

"Where was it—your birthplace—your place of business?"

His father named a certain quarter of London, one of the poorest and the lowest.

"I don't know the place," said Gerald. "I have never been there."

"If you go there you will be pleased, I think, to contrast the present conditions with those to which you might have been born. You will be more ready, I think, when you have considered how he began, to acknowledge your father's ability."

Gerald turned upon him suddenly and with a kind of fierceness.

"Why did you tell me all this? Why not leave me in my Fool's Paradise. Why not remain a gentleman and let me remain a gentleman? What did you do it for?"

His father made answer slowly :

"Well. Perhaps I did not like my son to despise me. You have always shown a contempt for trade almost equal to that of your distinguished grandfather. I give you your fortune with this drawback—if you choose to make it one. And, after all, don't you think, Gerald, that since I made it all, and that you profit by my work, you ought to know the difficulties I had to face and the way I faced them?"

Again a touch of human nature. The father wanted to stand before his son as he was, exactly and truthfully. Gerald softened : the resentment went out of his face ; he held out his hand.

"Yes, yes—you are quite right—to tell me. I ought to know how I came by all these advantages. It was rather sudden, that is all. I think

that I will go away and think things over for a bit."

He went away. For two or three days the father and son met at dinner and conversed of things indifferent.

Then Gerald spoke, plunging abruptly into the subject.

"Of course," he said, "I have been thinking of nothing else."

"Naturally," said his father kindly. "Enough to make anybody think."

"I could have wished," he said, "that the origin of the fortune had been otherwise. As it is, the best thing will be, as you said, to make no difference."

"You must trample," said his father. "Have no mercy and show no pity. Trample straight on."

"I will try to imitate your virtues." His face hardened as he spoke. "I will think of nothing in the world but of my own ambition."

CHAPTER I.

THE SITUATION.

Two young men in a room : the time, evening : the season, October. The room was the study in a bachelor's flat ; the walls were covered with books ; there was a portfolio on a stand containing engravings ; the table was covered with papers ; on the overmantel was a portrait in oil of a lady.

One of the men was Gerald Moorsom, the other was the Hon. James Crozier, commonly called Jem, son of Lord Fylingdale. He was remarkable among his compeers, first on account of a square and sturdy build and a figure which indicated more than a taurine strength ; his yellow hair and his blue eyes gave distinction to features that were otherwise commonplace ; he looked out upon the world with a countenance of unflinching cheerfulness. The two had been together at Eton and together at Cambridge ; while the Hon. James rowed stroke of the first boat, the other was contented with a place in the third boat ; and when Gerald became Senior Classic, his friend was quite contented with a place anywhere in the Poll. They were friends of that enduring kind where no rivalry can be possible, because the lines laid down for each were not

parallel. One was going to be a country gentleman, and in course of time a peer; the other, with certain advantages to begin with, as of wealth, of a certain social position, of University distinction, of an excellent manner, and of a definite ambition, stood on the threshold of an arena white with the bones of those who have fought and fallen.

"I like to see all these books and papers," said Jem. "They mean business. In my room at the Settlement there isn't a single book. In fact, I don't want any books at all."

"I have to arrive, you see. You are already there."

"My grandfather got there. Lucky for me, wasn't it? Truly grateful should we be when the grandfather does arrive. Well, Gerald, how are you going to get there? House and the Cabinet? Or Law and the Woolsack? Go for the Woolsack. — It's better fun, and there's more money in it."

"I don't want any money, Jem. There's plenty of money." His face darkened. "I wish there wasn't. You see—I'm not certain. Perhaps . . . I don't know . . . it's just as good fun to give it all up and have done with it. Why should I worry?"

"You will worry, because you've got what they call an active brain. You must worry, be-

cause you're dying to show that you're better than the whole lot taken together. You want to trample on them."

"Trample?" he shuddered, remembering. "It's all trample. One man tramples and gets rich, and another tramples and climbs up. I say, Jem, that I don't know if the game is worth the candle."

"Isn't it, though? Do you mean to say that my grandfather would have been half as happy if he had been a simple solicitor, as his father was before him, with a snug practice and a partnership and a house at Wimbledon? Do you think he despised the Attorney-Generalship and looked down on the Chancellorship and thought a Peerage not worth having, and the respect of everybody not worth the candle? Don't you believe it."

"It would be wiser, I sometimes think, to sit outside and look on—and perhaps—presently—write——"

"No. Certainly not."

"I might make a mark that way—and quietly, without fighting."

"What kind of mark? These writing chaps give themselves airs. Nobody really cares for them. What's the name of a fellow who writes papers for the magazines and books on anything you please compared with the name of a man

who acts? The man who writes! Anybody can write. Don't demean yourself, Gerald, by becoming the man who writes!"

"Well, there's something to be said for him, too. He may show the way. Perhaps he may see more clearly than the man who acts."

"Look here, Gerald"—Jem got up and laid a heavy hand upon his friend's shoulder—"what's come over you? Ever since I've known you it has been the same thing—glory and honour; after a good fight, to come up top. You're full of fight. What do you mean by shirking just when the time's come? Man! you were born for politics. You don't want money; you can speak; you can meditate like a jolly old monk; and you're a gentleman all round. The House of Commons was made for such as you; and the House of Lords keeps its doors open for such—when the time comes."

He did not observe that at the words "a gentleman all round" his friend's face darkened and the brow contracted as if with a sudden pain.

"It's your duty, Gerald, so there's no more to be said." He sat down again with a cheerful smile at this satisfactory summary of the situation.

Four months had passed since the disclosure we have already read; and two months since the person chiefly concerned had been called to another world. Gerald found himself the owner

of a great fortune, invested here and there in all kinds of securities. On his father's death he made haste to go through all the papers, partly on the chance of finding out more concerning the family history, and partly in the fear of learning that other people knew the truth. There was not a single document, not a single line, to identify Mr. Isaac Moorsom with the notorious usurer, with the German name, of Golden Square. All the property was held in his own name ; his will made no reference to his past occupation ; it seemed as if the man had deliberately separated himself from the past and gone into retirement from which he never emerged, so that no one should ever recognise him. He had no friends, not a single friend ; he managed his own affairs ; he effaced himself so thoroughly that he did not leave even a photograph of himself by which the world could prove his identity with the man of Golden Square.

Gerald broke up the establishment, sent the pictures and plate to store, sold the furniture, let the house, and took a bachelor's flat in Piccadilly.

These changes occupied the summer ; when he had completed his arrangements the Vacation was over, and the people were coming back from various parts of the habitable globe to town or their country houses.

But when Gerald met his old friends again he made another discovery, namely, that his whole attitude of mind towards them, and the world at large, had, in the meantime, undergone a change.

As regards the former, he no longer belonged to them, although they knew it not ; he had been practically cut off from them—if he continued with them it was by the maintenance of false pretences. For the first thing expected by these people is that any one of themselves should be what the Germans call “ High Well Born.” Self-made men may be admitted to their circle by right of genius and ability—such men as artists, poets, actors, clergymen. But these never become quite of the inner ring. Gerald had been received into such a set as a boy. Gerald talked sometimes in perfect good faith of ancestors—Sir Amyas, one of Queen Mary’s Judges, part of whose library was still preserved ; Sir George, the sea Captain, who commanded a ship under the Duke of York ; the venerable Archdeacon (*temp.* George I) whose sermons were in the library ; the boy spoke of these forbears—these shallow shams and ghosts—with perfect belief in them. It was disagreeable to give them up ; it was impossible to explain that they had been given up.

We are a democratic country ; so is America ; so also is France. The more democratic we be-

come the more distinct, and separate, and exclusive—which seems a paradox—are the circles of those who put birth before everything else. If you think of it, why not? To be “well-born” is neither more nor less an accident than to be born with genius ; with administrative ability ; with an ear for music ; with an eye for colour ; with a pile ready made ; or with nothing at all. A distinctive and exclusive circle formed entirely of those born with nothing at all, neither ancestry, nor wealth, nor any kind of ability, would be an interesting feature in modern society. Such circles, perhaps, might be recruited from the Unions and the Shelters, the Doss Houses and the Casual Wards. One can imagine the pride of belonging to such a set—the first, the greatest, the most exclusive, in the whole country : the set of those who never have anything ; never do anything ; never have any ambition : are obliged to do all the drudgery ; and actually do as little of that as they can manage.

The situation was full of difficulties. As a man of honour, it was intolerable that Gerald should go about the world and be received under false pretences. On the other hand, to explain was impossible. He began, therefore, to step quietly out of the circle of friends ; he declined invitations into the country ; he thought of going abroad for a time ; yet a young man cannot become a solitary.

His ambitions remained with him. Yet here, again, was another difficulty. He would succeed; he must succeed; he had no doubt that he should succeed. And when he did succeed, the world would insist upon knowing all about him ; who he was, of what country, of what extraction. Even if the connection with Golden Square remained undiscovered, the world would ask, and would insist upon knowing, who and what was Moorsom *père*, and how the money was made. What should he tell the world in the day of inquiry ?

There was a man some five-and-twenty years ago who played a considerable part in journalism; he was a power in the land ; he was very much respected as a power ; he was a good deal talked about as a power ; but the leading fact of his personality was that no one, not even his most intimate friends, knew who he was or where he came from. The mystery of the thing ; the strange fact that nobody in any town or village of the Three Kingdoms, rose up, in the days of his fame, to call him brother or cousin, made the world more curious ; so that, whenever the paper which he conducted was mentioned, some one was sure to call attention to the singular circumstance that no one had ever been able to find out the editor's origin. At last he died. "Now," everybody said, with a sigh of relief, "we shall

learn who the man's people were." They were wrong ; he left all his money to a person who could not be a cousin, or a brother, or any relation, and said not a word in his will about his own people. And now, I suppose, the world has left off wondering over this mystery.

I do not know if Gerald had heard of this case ; it might have cheered him, if only on account of the success with which the secret was kept to the very end. On the other hand, it involved the disagreeable necessity of maintaining a mystery if not a pretence, and it involved a single and a solitary life—loveless and friendless.

He preserved his ambitions except at moments when, as we have seen, the trouble they would involve seemed to make the object hardly worth the candle. Formerly he believed in his future as a prince may believe in Divine Right. Once there was a prince who held firmly to Divine Right until he made a little discovery. Then he said no more about Divine Right, but loosened his sword in the scabbard and spoke of the mailed hand. Gerald was like that prince. He had to conquer and to hold ; not to succeed. To do him justice, he did not shrink from the battle. But he did shrink from the discovery of certain skeletons. He had them under lock and key ; no one knew even that there were any skeletons. Yet there are ghosts of skeletons ; and ghosts do sometimes walk.

As regards the world, he was unconscious of the change in his attitude. When a young man has received as a free gift most of the things that other men desire, he is generally disposed to regard the world at large with kindly feelings. Generosity of sentiment, when one has thirty thousand a year, is easy, and requires no sacrifice or surrender of anything. Gerald, who studied his fellow-man through the pages of the political economist—a philosopher who may be unsympathetic yet is never venomous—had no reason to think of the world below, except indulgently. It was a part of the world which gave a great deal of trouble and required an immense number of laws, courts, judges, magistrates, policemen, and prisons. He intended, himself, to make laws for this great section of humanity.

Considering his benevolent intentions, it was strange that he should so far veer round as to regard the world, especially the world below, with a kind of impatience and contempt. He now spoke of the class to which he himself belonged by birth as a horde of sheep waiting to be devoured: or as machines working to make other people rich: or as unintelligent slaves to the necessities of the day and the base pleasures of the moment. The shepherds and the shepherds' dogs devoured those sheep: the taskmasters with whips of scorpions kept them hungry, kept them at work, kept them in submission.

It was this new attitude which astonished and, indeed, dismayed his friend. What did it mean?

Gerald turned the conversation. "Never mind me," he said. "How about yourself and your own ambitions?"

"Haven't got any. It is always understood that the second, third, and fourth generations should do nothing. They live on the reputation of the first. Would you have me outshine my grandfather? Never! I shall be a Justice of the Peace: a landlord: a farmer: chairman of this and that. Meantime I am trying to find out what the people are like. After all, it's only staring in a looking-glass. There's a great lot of miscellaneous humanity about our Settlement."

"Oh! Your Settlement," Gerald dismissed the thing with contempt. "The place where you teach people to be æsthetic on twenty shillings a week."

"You've got it," said the cheerful James. "We give them peacocks' feathers."

"As for me, I see that the people who do the work—for us—have got to be rough and rude, else they would do the work for themselves—see!"

"I see. Perhaps it would be as well for us if they really did all the work for themselves."

"No. It would be far worse. There must be

a class which need not work—except for the State. It would be far worse for the State if we did not exist.”

“I don’t know. The separation of classes has been carried too far. Gerald,” he looked up, inspired, “you’ve never seen a Settlement. Come and see ours. You will alter these new views of yours. Why, man, you used to believe in the education of the world. Come and see us educating like anything.”

“I will come if you like. Not that I shall change my views. The lump, Jem, the big, solid, heavy lump, must be left to themselves, and kept in order by the policeman.”

“All right, you’ll come! And, I say, Gerald, no more stuff about writing. You’re made for fighting: there’s a fine gleam of ferocity in your eyes when you let yourself rip; there’s a beautiful squareness about your chin. Man alive! you’re a gladiator! You shall add a coronet if you like to the achievements of your House.”

He clapped Gerald on the shoulder, and wondered why his friend turned upon him a forced smile and eyes full of trouble. You see, he was ignorant of the real achievements of Gerald’s House.

CHAPTER II.

THE EVENING.

It was the end of Saturday evening : there had been the usual functions ; the weekly reception in the drawing-room of the Settlement ; a lecture in the hall—the same lecture which, a week before, had been delivered at the Royal Institution ; the clubs were shut up for the night ; the lawyer had seen his last client ; some of the members were seeking the solace of tobacco ; the library was closed. In the drawing-room the people, who belonged to the better class of working men, were melting away : it was curious to note how closely a reception at the Settlement resembled one in society, though the men wore no evening dress and the women came in stuff frocks. Some knew everybody : some knew nobody ; some gathered in groups and talked together, with perhaps more vivacity than one observes towards the setting sun : the ladies of the Settlement went about among the groups, bringing people together ; one or two of the men helped ; one played the violin, another the piano ; but chiefly as an encouragement to the conversation ; if they wanted music they could have it at their concerts. The furniture might be called æsthetic ; it was

certainly artistic ; so were the curtains ; so were the rugs on the floor ; and the pictures on the wall made no concessions to what is considered popular taste.

When the visitors had all gone the members of the Settlement threw themselves into chairs and sighed. At the end of the week one has a right to be tired. There were four or five ladies and as many of the other kind. The Settlement, indeed, follows the good old Saxon Rule which admitted within the convent walls both men and women. First, because the work is of either gender, and requires the hands and brain of woman as well as of man ; next, because men, left to themselves, lose some of the finer qualities which are wanted for a Settlement, and because women, left to themselves, are apt to magnify the smaller issues out of their due proportion. I believe that, so far, the voice of calumny has not been raised against this Rule, which is, indeed, the only Rule that ensures the maintenance of the true spirit. The life, so far as it was common, was as open as that of the Benedictine Cloister : everybody knew what everybody else was doing ; they messed together in the dining hall ; there was a library for all, a reading and writing room for all, and a drawing-room for all ; if the members desired to be solitary, each had his own room.

After the first sigh of relief and fatigue they began to talk, but without animation. When one is in a settled line of work there is not much need of conversation about it. One might as well expect the officers of a regiment to discuss every evening the details of the daily drill.

One after the other got up and went out. There were left three ladies only. One of these, a woman of five-and-thirty, or thereabouts, was remarkable for the air of resolution and even defiance which was habitual with her. She sat bolt upright, looking before her through the glasses of her pince-nez : she was short of stature, and, if one may use the expression, of a sturdy build. She wore a plain dress, one which suggested a certain impatience as to choice and fashion ; and by the angle of her neck and chin, if not by the set lips, one could guess that she was of the kind which stands no nonsense. Her name was Janet Britton, and her work, which was not, properly speaking, the work of the settlement, was the collection of rents.

On the rug before the fire stood the first and oldest member of the Settlement, which was itself no more than three years of age. She was still quite young, not more than four or five-and-twenty, of a handsome figure, and of that stature which, ten years ago, would have been called above the average. It has become the actual

average since girls have effected the New Revolution in the length of limb. Her face was serious and capable : a large face belonging to a large head fitted to a strong frame ; perhaps the prevailing expression was hard—but then her work required a great amount of courage and resolution : her clear grey eyes could certainly grow soft on occasion, and her lips, which to-night were firmly set, as thinking of the work before her, could certainly be moved on occasion to the flexibility of pity and sympathy. For the rest, a gentlewoman, careful in her dress, which was becoming, and of costly material and in the fashion ; observant of all the outward things, as a woman ought to be, such as the arrangement of her hair, the touch of colour, the flower in its place, the ring and the bracelet and the chain about her neck : it was part of her work to show the people who came to the Receptions how a gentlewoman ought to dress, as well as how she ought to carry herself, and how she should think and talk. The Settlement, you see, is by no means a leveller : it is an elevator ; now Helen Wentworth was the leading spirit in the elevation.

The third was younger, not more than twenty or so—a fair-haired slender girl. She looked fagged and dispirited. She leaned her face on her hand.

"You are so strong, Helen," she said. "Oh! so brave and strong."

"No stronger than you, Beatrice. But perhaps, shall I say, a little more hopeful?"

"Oh! And I began so full of hope. And nothing seems to make any impression. One of them—Floss it was—had been drinking when she came to-night. And a horrid boy—a big, strong creature—was waiting for her outside. It makes my heart sink."

"You must not let things like that make your heart sink," said Janet snappishly. "It's all part of the work."

"It seems as if nothing would move them from their old ways," the other went on. "They go on drinking and everything, just the same as if we were not here."

"What do you expect of them?" Janet asked.

Helen took her hand. "My dear child," she said, softly, "we are a little company, and they are a great mass. Do you suppose that after working here for a year or two, or ten years, or for fifty years, we shall be able to shut up the public-houses and make all the men sober and all the women cleanly minded? You are only one of the pioneers." The slight and slender girl looked, to be sure, very much like a pioneer. "Think of the people we have already moved. Think of what has been done in the House this

very night. What sort of people were they before we came ? ”

The door opened and two men came in. One was our friend Jem Crozier, the other was Gerald Moorsom.

“ Helen,” Jem took Gerald by the arm, “ I want to introduce my friend Mr. Moorsom. He has come to see the Settlement.”

Helen gave him her hand graciously. The other two bowed, and after a minute or two quietly withdrew. At the Settlement it was customary for everybody to come and go without notice or remark : a ceremonious Settlement would be too terrible for endurance.

“ Moorsom and I were at school together. He got all the prizes ; I got all the honours of the other end. Then we went to Trinity together. He swept the board, and I pulled through. He’s a barrister now, and he’s going into the House, and then you shall see.”

“ We have many visitors,” said Helen. “ Some are already in sympathy with us, some do not understand us, some mistrust us.” She sat down on the sofa and invited Gerald to sit beside her. Jem looked on, standing, as if to see fair play.

“ I cannot honestly say that I am in sympathy with you.”

“ Give him time ! ” said Jem cheerfully.

“ I have come by invitation,” Gerald explained.

"Jem thinks that we should all know exactly how everybody lives. For my own part, I have hitherto been contented with the broad facts."

"Now you will have the details," said Helen, smiling. "Broad facts are enough for most purposes Not for all."

"Not, I should think"—Gerald became unexpectedly aggressive: it is the way with young men of "promise"—"if you are lifting people above their station."

"I knew how it would be," said Jem. "Enlighten him, Helen. He knows nothing."

"That is not at all our desire," she replied, with a serious smile.

"Or if you are making them discontented."

"Some kinds of discontent are laudable, are they not?"

"Or if you are giving them tastes which they cannot gratify."

"We give them new tastes, and we show them how to cultivate and gratify these new tastes."

"He's got everything to learn," said Jem. "You must take him in hand seriously, Helen."

"We teach them," she continued, "to like good music, and we give them good music, and good reading, and we give them books; we get hold of the young people. Surely, Mr. Moorsom, you cannot object to such aims as these?"

"I have no right to object to anything. I have

come to see what you are doing. May I ask questions?"

"As many as you please."

"Well, then! You give them all these things. Why give them anything? Let them earn all they get, and let them find out for themselves what they want."

"We show them the way, you see. It is a quicker method."

"I speak as a fool," said Gerald, "but . . . well . . . there is a certain structure which we call society. It rests on nothing else but the orderly and quiet working of the wage-earning class. We all belong to that structure. If the wage-earning class refuses to work, or if it will only work for higher wages, what becomes of your structure? Down it falls—and with it, down we fall, too."

"I am not afraid of that contingency," said Helen, smiling. "Besides, we are preparing a soft place to fall upon. If civilisation means anything, it must mean the elevation of all, not a few. The old civilisation has been limited, everywhere and in every age, to the privileged class. Therefore it is not, and has never been, stable. A new kind of civilisation has been preparing. It will be the chief glory of this expiring century that it has been the mother of the new civilisation."

"To me all this seems an idle dream. The lower classes are composed mainly of those who are lower in intellect as well as in work. They do the drudgery. Why? Because they are incapable of anything else. Now and then, here and there, a man arises who is an exception. He becomes an agitator, and a demagogue. Mostly, they murder him. Or he sees chances which his companions can never see, he trades on their ignorance and their necessities, and makes himself rich. Then he leaves them and goes away and becomes a gentleman." Gerald said this, by dint of long habit, without the least outward sign of the swift reminder in his brain.

"Oh ! that kind of gentleman !" said Helen. "With the heritage of robbery for his children ! How long does such a family endure ?"

Gerald, rudely recalled to his own position, changed colour, and showed unexplained trouble in his eyes.

"You can't make a gentleman," said the Honourable James, dogmatically, "in less than three generations. It's impossible. I'm the third generation myself. Now you and I, old man, are gentlemen born. We can spot an outsider when we see him."

Gerald wondered how long it would be before he himself would be spotted as an outsider.

Helen perceived the signals of trouble, and

was struck with them. Not knowing what had been said to cause this confusion, she explained curtly her own view. "I think that generations of refinement should certainly produce a distinct manner ; a way of looking at things—in some cases a deeper sense of duty and honour. In the civilisation that is to come we shall train all our people alike on the same lines."

"So that the strong shall not devour the weak ; and the man who can see shall never take advantage over the purblind ; and the man who can command will consent to obey ? Do you really hope to accomplish so much ?"

"I think only of what may be in the distant future. We must work for that future. Man, who can tear out the secrets of Nature, will surely in time understand the parallel laws of the Higher Morality. Are they so much more difficult to learn than the truths of Nature ?"

"In any case, man will always be dominated by the instinct of Self-Preservation first, and by the love of enjoyment next. This keeps him wallowing in his sty. He is a solitary animal, and he lives in his own den with his wife and children. He cares nothing about other men unless he can compel them to work for him. For his own advantage he will trample on everybody—as a rule, he is too stupid to understand his own interests, and so the unstable structure of society remains."

"That's the way he talks," said Jem, observing the symptoms like a physician. "He goes on like that all the time. That's his new line. He used to speak kindly of his fellow creatures."

"We must keep him here till we have converted him," said Helen, with compassion.

"I have promised to stay a week."

"And if you will go round and look about, and see what things mean, and put yourself in the place of these people"—she rose and looked at the clock, which pointed to midnight—"the people whom you have never seen, from whom you are separated by I know not how many generations, you will, I think, cease to fear so much for your social structure."

She held out her hand: it was a warm, kindly hand; her eyes, he observed, were soft, although they seemed to look straight into his brain. It is with such eyes that women read thoughts, and lead men whither they had not thought to go.

"We are looking," she said, "for another and a far fairer structure than your narrow temple which holds so few."

"Gerald is an Australian," said Jem, as if the fact explained his reactionary views.

"No . . . not by birth. . . . It is true—" He stopped abruptly, because those eyes looked as if they were reading the truth at the back of his head.

"I have heard," she said, "that the sons of a democracy very often cross over to the other side. I suppose they are impatient because everything is not won all at once. We want a great deal of patience with each other, and a great deal of belief in each other. Good-night!"

With such sentiments concerning the work and aims of the Settlement did Gerald enter its walls. Had he gone there before that revelation of the past it would have been with a more cheerful view of humanity. Now—had not his own father risen upon the necessities and ignorance of the people? What were dreams and theories compared with actual experience and fact?

"And now," said Jem, "let's have a pipe and a talk. Never mind the social structure so long as we can sit and talk! Come to my room."

CHAPTER III.

SUNDAY.

THE first day of Gerald's week was Sunday. This morning, above all days of the week at the Settlement, is a time of quiet. The members lingered over breakfast. There was not much

talk. We should never begin the day with conversation which means discussion, argument, mental effort, or perhaps disturbance. The week, or the day, with its duties and responsibilities, should be approached with respect and the preparation of a mind fresh and undisturbed. Even the most brilliant talker likes to have his morning free from epigram or repartee ; attack or defence. None of the good things are ever said at breakfast : the impromptu and the unexpected turn belong to the evening.

Gerald sat next to Helen. In her capacity as Warden she received the guests of the Settlement. In this case she had an unusual visitor—one who was in opposition. Most of the visitors came in alleged sympathy with objects which they erroneously supposed to be the purpose of the Settlement ; as if it were a college, a polytechnic, an almonry, a mission house, a proselytising centre, a labour bureau, or a place for the diffusion of æsthetic tastes in dress and furniture. Then Helen instructed them and sent them away with a wider sympathy. In this case the open hostility of her visitor interested her more than any half-informed sympathy.

“We do not inquire into anyone’s religious opinions,” she said. “Church and Chapel : No Church, Low Church, High Church ; we have them all with us, so that I am not inquiring into

your views, Mr. Moorsom, when I ask you what your plans are for the day."

"I have no plans at all."

"Then I think I should like to show you something on the religious side—if you will put yourself into my hands. Your friend, Jem Crozier, spends his Sunday morning chiefly at his doss house with the men."

The church bells were ringing when they stepped into the street. Not the loud and confused jangle of chimes that we may hear in the City, where the churches, even after the havoc of late years, still stand thick and close together. Ratcliffe spoke unto Stepney, and Stepney answered unto Poplar, reminding each other that it was Sunday morning, and that service was about to begin, if any cared to attend.

A light October mist hung over the streets through which the copper disc of the sun was mysteriously visible: the mist blurred the outlines of the houses and smudged the distant view. Yet, even with this advantage, the streets preserved their monotony of depressing ugliness. Only they looked less terrible. From the river behind them came the occasional whistle of a siren.

Gerald was still in his unsympathetic mood. He was not disposed to find in the religious side of the quarter more interest than in any other

side. The people were as they were : as they must always be. Yet, being a man, and a young man, and therefore open to feminine influence, he followed, as he was bidden, this woman of the sweet and serious face and the strong and tender eyes, who ruled the Settlement.

"You are stepping," she said, "beyond the reach of Blue Books and Reports. Here are the raw materials, if you can stoop to pick them up. The man who can read the Book of the Streets aright may become a Prophet, or a Poet, or a Leader of the people. But I fear that you prefer the Blue Book."

"How long does it take to read the Book of the Streets? A week?"

"You may spend all your life reading it, and still you will find something new every day."

"Is the Book worth reading?"

"There is no Book like it. All that poets can do is to get at a page or two here and there out of this book. All that Reports and Commissions can do is to take a few figures, mostly incorrectly quoted, out of this book."

"I suppose," said Gerald, looking about him, "that you leave them alone on Sundays?"

The streets were strangely quiet. There were no women on the doorsteps, no men or boys hanging about the corners, and only a few children playing in the road.

"Sunday morning is our quietest time," Helen replied. "The men are in bed : the girls are in bed : they lie there till midday on Sunday : the wives wash the children and make the dinner : they all have as copious a dinner on Sundays as they can afford. In the afternoon and evening you will see them turning out."

They marched along in silence for awhile. The serious and earnest face of his companion did not encourage small talk.

"This is the old Parish Church." They came upon a church standing in a vast churchyard covered with the grey and blackened monuments of the long forgotten and obscure dead. This oblivion when one reads the names seems to be the real pathos of their lives. "We will look in."

A venerable church : hither, in the bygone centuries, came the footsteps of the people when as yet the parish was large and the population scanty. Now, when the old parish is divided into a dozen new parishes, and the population multiplied a thousand-fold, the doors stand open and the bells ring in vain. The congregation could not fill one quarter of the church.

"Our people are not here," said Helen. "Church means to them the possession of a shop at least, and a shop is a great many degrees above them."

Not far from the church, the railway crosses the main road and runs through the streets of tenements. The arches are built up and used for warehousing and other purposes. Helen opened a door under one of these arches.

"The church comes to the people," she said, "since the people will not go to the church."

The arch had been fitted up as a chapel with benches, a communion table, a harmonium, and a reading desk. Service was going on and the place was filled with children. "Now, this is a really popular place of worship," said Helen. "You see, the congregation consists entirely of the children. They are sent here to be out of mischief. Then they come because they like it. Even if it isn't piety that sends them, they do come—which is a good thing for them."

"Is this part of the Settlement work?"

"No. We undertake no religious work. Some of our people, however, work for the parish."

In the next street was a new and handsome building. "This," said Helen, "is an Independent Chapel. Shall we look in?" The congregation was like that of the parish church, not very numerous, and respectably dressed. "These are not our people," she explained. "Nonconformity, like the Anglican Church, requires the level of the snop. It requires more—for it asks

for judgment and reason and choice. These things are not found in our people."

"There are a good many houses and streets about here," said Gerald, at a corner where four roads met, "and I dare say there are a good many churches and chapels. Are there too many for the population? I observe that the congregations are not pressed for want of room."

"If you want figures for a Blue Book, Mr. Moorsom, set down an estimate that the people who go to church or chapel in the morning are a little over three per cent. and in the evening a little under four per cent."

"And the rest?"

"We do not know," said Helen, softly. "They stay away. In the Settlement we do not exhort them to any religious observance. Yet, when they get to a certain level, they seem to like a service of some kind."

"Religion, then, with these people, is a part of respectability?"

"Perhaps. But indeed . . . it is difficult to understand the mental attitude of the very poor towards religion. At least, they no longer hate the sight of a clergyman. Do you yourself, Mr. Moorsom?" He interrupted her. "With the richer there is the same difficulty," he said, with a smile. "Found a Settlement in Piccadilly and study—*me*."

They came into a broad thoroughfare, the pavement on one side—the sunny side—a boulevard thronged with people idly strolling along. Here and there were circles formed ; in each an orator or a preacher, and every one a Son of Thunder ; the circles melted away and formed again. No one showed any interest. Mostly the men stayed for a few moments as if to give every chap a chance, but finding it the old story they backed out and went on their way. None of the girls in the crowd took the least notice of the speakers.

“ This is the Sunday oratory,” said Helen. “ I have often wondered what effect it has upon the people. The man bawling over there ridicules the Christian religion every Sunday morning : it is his pride and his passion : that other fellow is a red-hot radical, born either after or before his time, who would abolish the House of Lords—and so they go on. Are the people moved at all ? I cannot tell.”

“ Perhaps,” said Gerald, “ hearing all the arguments on every side has the same effect upon them as, in other places, the reading of all the articles in all the magazines produces on the brain—turns it into pap.”

They stopped at the circle of the political speaker. A pale man with long hair and the eyes of a fanatic was calling upon the people to

stand together ; to rally round ; to unite as one man ; to march in their millions, and tear down the House of Lords.

"What has the House done to that fool?" asked Gerald.

"Nothing. But nobody pays any attention. If there were any real cry against the Lords, however, that man might be a most dangerous leader. As there is none, he cries aloud and no man regardeth him. It is the same thing with the atheist, there is no cry against religion ; therefore, no man regardeth him."

"The multitude, in fact, cares for nothing. As one might expect."

"They care for the things of the moment—the things that they see. They do not, as yet, understand how things external may affect them. They are still, however, as they always have been, liable to be carried away by a cry—by a panic. It is the ever-present danger of ignorance—which we would meet and remove, if we can."

"If you can," Gerald echoed.

A little cloud of pain fell on Helen's face—but it passed. This young man was at least frank in his doubts and his denials.

"The Sunday-morning crowd," she said, "illustrates the indifferent side of the people. Come with me again in the evening, and I will show

you the other side : that of religious emotion, if not of religion."

They returned in silence to the Settlement. The streets were awake and alive : the public-houses were open, the dinner beer was on its way to the Sunday feast : there was a smell of roast and baked ; of fried onions and of roasted pig : men and boys carried home steaming dishes from the baker's : they bore them reverently as if they were burnt-offerings : it was the one hour in all the week of plenty, repletion, leisure and ease. Then the street became suddenly empty and deserted : not a child remained upon the kerb. It was the solemn hour of worship—the only worship of the people—the worship of the great god Gaster.

About three o'clock in the afternoon, Gerald, sitting in the library, heard a trampling of many boots outside. There was a meeting of menkind—perhaps a prayer meeting or a service, yet Helen said that they professed and taught no religion at all. Presently there was silence, and a single voice was heard. There was a preaching, then.

Gerald rose and repaired to the hall. It was quite full : the people were nearly all men, decent men, a good deal above the average Docker : men who owned a Sunday suit of clothes. The preacher was one of the members ;

a young man with the great gift of lucid teaching; that gift which enables a man who has mastered his subject to present it so that his hearers may also see and understand the principal points. He was also a novelist, which means that he could lend his subject the colour and the light of imagination. He was lecturing on the growth and expansion of British trade: a dry subject which he caused to throw out green leaves and blossoms, so that his audience listened as if carried away. And he talked as if he were at the Royal Institution—not at a Settlement among working folk.

Helen was sitting within the door. She beckoned Gerald to a place beside her.

"These are the better sort," she whispered. "They are not the people of the tenements. They are men in regular work."

Presently the lecturer stopped.

"We don't lecture," Helen explained, "on the things that occupy our people's minds every day. And we don't preach up any virtues. We just carry them away altogether from their daily thoughts; away from the streets and beyond the poisonous breath of the public-house. Anything to break the iron chains of habit. Have you ever thought, Mr. Moorsom, how much of evil in the world is due to habit?"

The evening of Sunday is anything but a quiet time. The lads are out and so are the girls : loud is the laugh and ready is the retort : the women are leaning about the corners of the street : the public-house has its brief hour of hospitality : the main thoroughfares are crowded with promenaders, mostly peaceful and orderly : the air is rank and acrid with the smell of bad tobacco and coarse cigarettes.

As for Church and Chapel, they were mostly better attended than in the morning : in one of them, where the lights were brilliant, where there were coloured robes, and where the acolytes swung the censuring pot ; where a procession began and ended the service with a banner and lights and a brass cross and a noisy hymn, the church was filled.

"They are not our people," said Helen. "Neither church nor chapel ; neither a service of simple prayers and praise, nor an emotional service with lights and incense and a ceaseless organ, attracts our people."

She took him into an immense barn-like structure. It was filled with people—galleries and the body of the chapel and the broad platform at the end. A preacher with a voice like a trumpet was exhorting and rebuking and calling upon the people to repent. Here, too, there were hymns of the popular kind. But there

was no procession and no incense and no acolytes.

"It is a wonderful crowd, is it not?" said Helen. "Never doubt, Mr. Moorsom, that the people are profoundly religious. You may build upon that belief as upon a rock."

"I observe," said the Doubter, "that the words are fiery, but that the faces of the audience are calm and unmoved."

"That is true. The reason is, that the people have already made profession of religion or are proposing to do so before long. The preacher is exhorting to repentance. Most of the congregation have gone through that stage. We do not speak the language of these people; nor do we understand their ideas; nor do we connect, as they do, religion with a certain wave of emotion."

"Do you point out to them——"

"We leave their religion untouched. Whatever else it is, at least it is based upon personal responsibility. It is the deliberate choice of each for himself. So long as the people rest their faith in personal responsibility and not in authority, so long there is hope for the country. That is only my own view, Mr. Moorsom. Pray do not think I speak for the Settlement."

A little distance along the road, there was another great building. This was the Salvation Army Hall. They looked inside. The Army

officers were scattered about the hall, speaking earnestly to one after the other. The people seemed mostly casual and curious ; some of them were scornful ; some were touched. The missionary officers turned away with a sigh from a hopeless subject ; or they caught a sympathetic hearer by the hand or the arm and murmured in his ear ; or they led him, an unresisting victim, to a bench before the platform, where he sat down ready to be broken up. Meantime the singing of hymns went on with the accompaniment of cornets, led by voices strong and true. Between the hymns, a woman preached. Her voice, upon hearts moved already by the singing and the strange contagion of emotion, fell like quickening rain upon seeds about to burst. It was a penetrating voice, clear and strong, and musically sweet : now it sank down as if dissolved with tears of pity and of prayer : now it rose higher and higher, jubilant with praise and joy : triumphant over death and evil. To those who stood near enough to see, there was added a face of the deepest earnestness and eyes which reminded Gerald of his companion's, so deep, so keen they were, so full of light and life, so charged with the magnetic power of love, which we also call by the colder name of sympathy.

Gerald looked on with the keen, watchful eyes of a critic. He saw the multitude swayed and

stirred to the depths by that soft, penetrating voice which spoke to every separate soul in the Hall as if to itself alone : he recognized the power of the preacher : he saw how, one by one, men and women were struck down and carried off in an agony of remorse and self-reproach to the Repentant Bench : he saw how others, not so moved, were yet held by that voice and sat or stood with parted lips and fixed eyes and breath quickly caught. Helen watched him. He showed no emotion : he was not in the least moved : he was outside the hearts that beat so fast below that roof.

Helen had hopes that in this place where humanity declares itself and is open and unrestrained, he would have felt something of that strange sympathy which falls upon some in the presence of a great multitude of men and women. There was no sign in his face of any such sympathy. She touched his arm and drew him away into the open street again.

At the door they were accosted by a Salvation lass—a little slip of a thing.

“ Oh ! ” she cried, catching Helen’s hand. “ Oh ! Are you saved ? ” She looked from Helen to her companion ; they were not like the common run of the congregation. Perhaps they were worse. “ Are you saved ? ” she repeated. “ Oh ! This very evening may be your last.”

Helen laid her hands on the girl's shoulders. "My dear," she said, "I am saved—and so are you—if only you understood how much it means."

So she went out and Gerald with her.

"When you are a statesman, Mr. Moorsom," she said, "remember that the Salvation Army is a great company and a great fact. It is the only society which dares to live the life. Never deride them. Their people are doing with their refuges and their workshops and their colony the greatest work that has been attempted in our time. And I think—I hope—that they will endure, and not turn to crystal, like the Franciscan Friars their predecessors, because they ask no alms, and take no money, and live on the poorest wage that will support them."

"And the people in their hall?" Gerald avoided the question of the Salvation Army, because he had been accustomed to despise and to deride them.

"They are not our people. We have looked for our people, Mr. Moorsom, in church and chapel, and in the Assembly Room, and the Salvation Army Hall, and we have not found them."

"And you would have me learn from this fact . . . ?"

"I would have you learn that when we make religion a thing of personal choice, as we do in a

country still Protestant, we may get down to levels where that choice is never made and where there is no religion at all. The working man mostly divides his life into work and play : there is no leisure in his life for thought. He is indifferent. If he is of an emotional temperament he may go to one of those great halls. Mostly, he is indifferent. Not hostile, like the continental *ouvrier*. Indifferent, but kindly disposed, with a vague sense that the clergy are over paid."

"In spite of all that is done for him?"

"It is a survival. Below the better sort of workmen come our people. And they can think of nothing but the daily wants, the daily food. Religion to them means nothing."

"And you are imposing upon them some new form of faith?"

"No—we subject them to some of the influences which have shaped ourselves. We give the children something of our literature which is saturated with religion ; we teach them our customs and our habits of thought—whether we admit the fact or not—they also are saturated with religion. We want religion as a civilising factor if for nothing more."

"It is a dream," said Gerald, "a beautiful dream. The people are what they are—and what they must be."

CHAPTER IV.

THE MORNING.

ON Monday morning Gerald came down to breakfast about nine. The hall was empty, save for Helen, who sat alone over a notebook.

"You are late," she said; "we mostly breakfast at eight. By nine o'clock our people have gone off to their other work—we used to say to their 'own' work—but this is our own work now."

"Is not the evening work enough for your energies?"

He sat down and helped himself to breakfast. Helen continued with her notebook. They carried on the talk, with intervals filled up by attention to the notebook on her part, and the coffee and bacon on his.

"We are all pretty strong, and the evening work is only a part of what the Settlement undertakes."

"I have only learned some of that part, then."

"Your old friend might have told you what he does. Well, he has built and furnished what they call a doss house; that is a common lodging house, where he takes in all comers at fourpence a night. He looks after the men when they

come in, most evenings, and he gets up every morning at six to see them before they go."

"Jem does this?"

"Certainly. Jem is one of the best fellows in the world. You ought to know that. You look surprised—why?"

"Oh! If Jem likes it—it was not formerly in his line. However——"

"Young men develop rapidly in a place like this."

"How long shall you go on working? I mean—when do you intend to go back to your own friends?"

"I do not know," Helen replied, gravely. "The end is not of our appointing. Besides, we are already among our own friends. We have many other workers. Among them, for example, is the People's Lawyer. He is a solicitor in Lincoln's Inn Fields, who comes here every evening and advises our people for nothing. Then we have a Physician. He has his work all day in the Children's Hospital; in the evening he works here—for nothing."

"Yet there is the Parish Doctor. There is a Hospital, too, somewhere."

"Certainly. And the Sixpenny Doctor and the Dispensary. Yet there is room for our man as well."

"I daresay," Gerald replied with meaning.

"Then there is the local government work. I suppose you have never considered how much of this work presupposes leisure—or at least a class which can afford to give time for nothing. Where are the people here who can work for nothing? Some of us are members of the Vestry, on the Board of Guardians, School Board Visitors. One of our women does rent collecting; another manages the girls' club; another gets the elder women together for sewing and talk; another keeps a *crèche* for the babies while the mothers go to work; and, we have classes of all kinds——"

"Yet there are the Board Schools."

"There are: we do not clash with them. Now, Mr. Moorsom, I have you here defenceless, and I mean to make you understand what it is we attempt. So far, you have been hostile."

"Only that I doubt the practical part of it. I understand at last that you are amiable enthusiasts."

"Here is our programme of work for the week." She took a paper from her note book. "I will not inflict it all upon you. This is some of our work. We have reading classes where our students are introduced to great writers and their works: these are intended to stimulate to private reading on lines laid down—there are University Extension Lectures: classes in French, German, and Italian: classes in decora-

tive wood carving, carpentry, music, chemistry : there are lectures and concerts : there are elementary classes in art : classes in some of the sciences : all these things go on every week——”

“I do not deny the efforts or the laborious lives of your members.”

“We have every year an exhibition of pictures : we organise visits to historical places : and every year we take a party to Italy and back. I will take you, Mr. Moorsom, to a girl who will tell you what that visit has done for her.”

“I doubt not that it delighted her beyond measure, thank you, Miss Wentworth. By the way a young fellow looked in last night made up like a sanctified acolyte. What class does he take? I thought you had no church here.”

“Oh ! you mean Robbie—and he was in his cassock. I suppose he came from a meeting of his Guild. Robbie calls himself a stalwart Catholic. You must not laugh at him, Mr. Moorsom. Indeed, you must not,” she added, earnestly.

“Certainly not, if you wish it. Indeed, I had no intention of laughing at him or of taking any notice of him. But his uniform struck me as strange.”

“We call him Childe Robert. He is a great believer in ritualism ; he is a member of some Guild or other. He thinks that religion consists

entirely of early services, confession, copes and albs, incense and genuflections. That is to say, he has so persuaded himself. In reality, he is filled through and through with the essentials of his religion. And he lives his real life, in spite of the ecclesiastical rubbish."

"But why does he try to look like an emaciated angel in an early Italian picture?"

"It is no affectation. He really thinks it the greatest act of faith to put on a cassock and to walk in a procession. He loves emotions; he would like to have ecstatic visions; very likely they will come to him.—To return to the work. We make friends among the women—they are sometimes dreadful to look at—but when you come to know them, they are so human—so human." Her eyes softened. "And there are the children——" She stopped.

"There is a cage at the Zoo," said Gerald, "where the creatures are so human that they make one ashamed." It was a cruel thing to say, but his heart was at the moment as hard as that of his deceased parent.

She closed her notebook and laid it on the table. Then she leaned her head in her hand and her elbow on the table, and looked steadily into the face of her visitor.

"It is so strange," she said, as if speaking to herself.

"What is strange?"

"Your face means one thing—it is a generous face; so does your voice—it is sympathetic; your eyes have a kindly light in them; yet you talk—as you talk. Why are you so prejudiced?"

"Am I prejudiced?"

"It seems as if something had happened—to set you against your kind. The misanthrope is generally an older man. There is, I believe, with some young men, an affectation of cynical disbelief—but that goes with smaller and lower natures. You are a scholar. You could not assume that shallow pretence."

"I have offered you my opinion," he replied, coldly. "I am sorry it is not your own."

"Have you ever lived in the country, among village folk? Never? That helps to explain. Have you ever seen anything of factory people?"

"In one word, Miss Wentworth," he coloured and hesitated, "I have never been attracted to investigate personally what squalor and poverty mean. Why should I? There are Blue Books which give one all the information possible. Above all, there is the voice of history. In every country it proclaims aloud the fact that the multitude and the mob constantly threaten destruction to the civilisation of the few who have climbed above them."

She listened, still regarding him with curiosity

and interest. "I have never before," she said, "heard a young Englishman talk in this manner. But you are an Australian. Jem said so, I remember."

"I am not an Australian." Why did he change colour? And why did his eyes betray a sudden irritation. "Family connections," he stopped. "That is all," he added abruptly.

"Since you have read books on social questions, how have you possibly contrived to keep yourself free from the feeling and the atmosphere of the day?"

"We are not all obliged to follow like sheep," he said, somewhat rudely.

"Certainly not. Only it is rare to come across a young man with such views as yours. A scholar like you; a man far above the common run—what does it mean?"

He made no reply. He was reminded uncomfortably that there were already differences between himself and his former friends.

"But you hope to become a statesman. It is well for you, surely, to know something of the people. You cannot make an image of clay and call that the people. Believe me, there are as many varieties down here as north and south of Piccadilly."

"Is it desirable to search for these differences? There are also varieties of the common sheep's face."

"Mr. Moorsom." She took up her note-book and rose. He, too, stood up. They stood face to face—but his eyes dropped. "It is not natural. You are either acting a part or you are under some temporary influence. Something foreign to your better nature is within you and at war with you. There is trouble in your eyes——"

"We need not account for things." His voice betrayed the truth of the charge. "What I have said is very simple. You belong to the levels where life is at its very best. I think that you are led by a generous dream to throw away your advantages for nothing. What do you expect to get? The civilising of these people? They will be willing to accept all that you give; when you go away they will return to their old courses. They can only rise by means of a higher standard of comfort; when they get that, they will pull us down. You can do a little sum in arithmetic; five shillings a week added to the average wage of a working man would go far to destroy the rich man's income altogether."

"We will talk about these things again," she said, "when you have seen something. At present you are a theorist. Go out into these streets and realise, if you can, the destructive forces at work around you."

"I think that will be easy. And then I shall also realise the power of the policeman."

"Yes. Quite so. Then think what might happen if all these people—millions of them—were left altogether to themselves—with the police—with no friends, no examples of a better way, no possibilities. The Church cannot reach them; the Chapel cannot reach them. Think what they would become in a single generation, maddened with hatred and all evil passions, tugging and tearing at your social structure."

She broke off, with a kind of sob in her voice. It was like talking into a brick wall. He seemed not to understand. She turned away and left the room.

He looked after her long after she had closed the door. Her pleading on behalf of the lower labour fell quite flat; it appealed in no way to him in his mood. What did she mean, however, by saying that there was something wrong with him? How had he betrayed the trouble that was upon him day and night?

His position had become, in fact, one of self-defence. The acquisition of wealth, he argued, must be, in the nature of things, possible only by certain methods. There were his father's methods: especially that part of his method which he himself called trampling. Further, the maintenance of wealth, he said—justifying himself and trying to satisfy that sense of honour to which he had been trained by his mother, by his school,

by his reading—was for all alike a continuance of the method characterised as trampling. Rich men invest money in shares ; they expect dividends ; they ask for dividends as goodly as the grapes of Eshcol ; dividends can only be produced by squeezing, sweating, overcharging and underpaying ; in a word, by trampling. The rich can have no pity or they would lose their wealth ; the poor must not be taught to desire what they cannot get, or they may make one universal combination, and then they will put an end to the present social system. This position was based, you observe, on the one fact that his father had made money by methods considered disgraceful ; that he had inherited the history with the fortune ; and that he was “troubled,” as Helen had discovered.

Now, had he continued in comfortable ignorance of these facts, he would have formed no such reactionary opinions. Blessed, thrice blessed, is that young Dives who never learns the origin of his own pile—the ancestral pile. How would it be if the genealogist accompanied and illustrated his tables of descent with accounts of the basenesses and meannesses, the treacheries and the treasons, by which the family has been augmented and advanced ? “The third Lord married Barbara, daughter of the notorious person known in his day as Creeping Jemmy, or Back-

stair James. His large fortune, acquired by selling places and offices which he could influence by means unknown to the world, was inherited by his only daughter, Barbara. Her estates, now built over, made her descendants rich beyond the dreams of avarice."

CHAPTER V.

CHILDE ROBERT.

GERALD left the hall and strolled about the common rooms. They were deserted. In the library, however, he found the young man they called Childe Robert. He was sitting in a wooden chair, a high-backed carved chair with something of an ecclesiastical air, although it was quite new, and the work of the Settlement class of carving and cabinet work. The chair was placed in the square window, the occupant was reading, his head bent over his book.

It must be confessed that the affectation of saintliness, whether conveyed by the carriage, the voice, the face, the eyes, may be intolerably offensive. Gerald conceived a strong distrust of this young man on account of what seemed to him these external claims to saintliness. His hair was fair, and parted at the side, disclosing a high

narrow forehead ; his face was smooth, and of an oval shape rapidly narrowing to the pointed chin, his thin lips were parted as he read ; his eyes as he turned at the opening of the door were limpid and lustrous ; his fingers were long and thin ; his figure, rather over the middle height, was so thin as to seem fragile. He just looked round, raised his eyes for a moment when the door opened, dropped them again, and went on with his reading. To Gerald it seemed as if he was affecting absorption in his book. The sun, the yellow sun of October, fell upon that fair hair and turned it into a kind of glory. To Gerald this seemed as if he was posing consciously in the sunshine.

He walked across the room and stood over him.

"You live here, I believe ;" he began, without any introduction or apology. He was angry with himself on account of the "trouble" which he could not conceal, and the pretensions which he could not abandon. This made it easier for him to be virtuously angry with the unfortunate Robbie for going about under false pretences. "You live here," he repeated, as if it was an accusation. "What is your profession?"

The boy looked up—he seemed no more, though he was twenty-one years of age—looked up, "tried his eyes," Gerald supposed : they were eyes strangely full of light—eyes that should be-

long to a poet, to a dreamer of dreams, to a seer of visions, to a prophet of things unspeakable by the multitude.

"I am permitted to live here. I have no profession."

"What do you do?"

"I work—partly for the parish."

"You are at work now, I suppose. Are you reading for anything—for Holy Orders?"

"No." He fidgeted under these questions : he answered briefly and turned to his book again.

"I am told, however, that you are much attached to Church affairs."

"Yes. But I am not educated at all. I know nothing except that I must obey the Rule or incur the Greater Peril."

"What rule?"

"The Rule of the Church and my fraternity."

"Do you pay for the privilege of living here?"

"No ; I have no money. They very kindly allow me to live here—I was only a cashier in a City shop. But this work called me."

"Don't cant," said Gerald roughly. "How do you mean that the work called you?"

Robbie looked pained. "How can one be called?" he repeated. "There is but one way."

"You mean the natural dislike of drudgery. I can quite understand such a call as that. You thought it would be pleasant to go to church

every day and to wear a cassock and be called Brother. I have heard of that sort."

The young man coloured. "Indeed," he said, "if that were all—but I was called. At first I came in the evening and offered my services for anything. Mr. Crozier gave me charge of his doss-house ; then I found that I could no longer think of anything else ; and so . . . so . . . they have all been kind to me. I was told to come and live here. In the morning I have an hour or two to myself when I can read." Gerald took from his hands the book in which he had been reading. It was that strange and wonderful book on the Imitation of Christ which has brought consolation to so many millions ; which is so full of humanity that it continually offers new strength and a more certain faith to everyone, in every age, of every fold—to every man who calls himself Christian.

"You were a small clerk in a shop, your work was drudgery, you were under a task-master, you had long hours, your companions were, like yourself, of the same condition. Now you associate with ladies and gentlemen. Come !"

The boy smiled. "Yes, I associate with ladies and gentlemen."

"You have left your friends to do the disagreeable work and you have come here ! It is promotion that you have obtained."

Robbie bent his head again over his book. "It is great promotion," he said softly.

Gerald left him, satisfied with his own solution. What had the fellow made by it? Escape from a stuffy shop, long hours, a hard master, and disagreeable work. The society—as if he belonged to them—of gentlefolk. In his brain he heard the words repeated. They meant a reproach. "With gentlefolk. As if he belonged to them." In this case the lad himself made no pretence of belonging to his new friends. Whereas——

Helen, you see, was right. There was trouble, which caused irritation and prejudice, and lent to everything false colours and distorted form.

"Why did I come to the confounded place?" he asked. "Why, above all, did I promise to stay a week here?"

I am sorry to say that when Gerald closed the door behind him Robbie got up, opened the casement window wide, and crossed himself solemnly three times, forehead, heart, right side, left side.

"I wish I could cense the room," he murmured. "I wish there was a Collect against the presence of evil spirits and men possessed by devils."

He sat down again. In a few minutes, although there was no incense, quiet returned to the library and his soul : the motes danced in the

sun : and his heart and soul and mind were far away, and listening to harmonies unspeakable.

CHAPTER VI.

THE IMPENITENT.

A DAY which begins with trouble, bad news, irritation, or vexation, is not likely to turn out a pleasant day. There are clouds which never lift throughout the hours of light. I like the omens of the morning to be pleasant : weather not hopeless ; the general temper inclined to cheerfulness, yet not mirthful—mirth in the morning is out of place. I like letters without disquieting news. Above all things, I dislike the day which begins with any kind of row ; for one thing follows another till the cup is-full.

Gerald was most unlucky on this day. He began, as you have seen, with as near an approach to a row as Helen would permit. He went on to do a little sparring with the Acolyte ; and he now turned into the street in as unpromising a mood as can be imagined for the exploration of a suburb which had nothing attractive to offer, but demanded instead any amount of sympathy and belief in human nature. How much better, he reflected, if he could escape and have

luncheon at the club! Who would not prefer Pall Mall and Piccadilly to the City of the Settlement?

Gerald walked slowly down the street. Well! what had he come out to see? Meanness and poverty. How could the details of meanness and poverty affect him?

At the first corner there was a public-house: no attempt had been made to put on an attractive front: it was low: the windows had not been cleaned for long years, apparently: the paint was discoloured: the swinging doors were black with the touch of unwashed hands: the breath that came from the door was heavy with the sickening smells clinging to a house which was never open to the fresh air, and always newly charged with beer and coarse tobacco and gin and rum. As he passed, the door opened and a woman came out wiping her mouth with the back of her hand; a gross and corpulent woman, her face red and swollen with drink; her hair breaking loose; her dress ragged; her whole appearance speaking loudly of her life.

Gerald remembered Helen's words—this poor drunken creature, her womanhood drowned in beer, was certainly, as she said, "dreadful to look at, but if he knew how human she was!" How human! what humanity! He turned away in disgust: he left the main street and walked up

one of the smaller streets branching off right and left, and he felt uncomfortable again because he was reminded of what he had said to the promoted clerk about associating with ladies and gentlemen. This was probably one of the ladies, his associates.

The streets was like hundreds of its kind : it was monotonous : it was without the least touch of beauty of any kind, not even the beauty of decay, though some of the houses were closed, and their broken windows and the holes in the roof showed why. They decayed and fell to pieces without the least regard to the picturesque. The day was fine, the women were sitting on the door-steps : the little children played about the gutter and the kerb, rolling over each other in the dust and dirt : no men were visible : as Gerald passed, two or three of the women moved off together, without any spoken agreement, in the direction of the public-house at the corner. Some of the children—which was a horrid thing to see—followed them : he stood and watched : the women went in, they remained in the place for two or three minutes. When they came out one of them carried a pewter which she held to the mouths of the small creatures, who had followed and were waiting expectant outside the door.

“What is it?” he asked a woman on her door-step. “What is she giving the children?”

"Porter. It's a good thing for them. Hardens their insides."

A lady came out of one of the houses. Gerald recognised her as one of the members of the Settlement; he forgot her name. She had a notebook in her hand, her face was practical and full of affairs. It was the woman of the hard look and the downright expression; the person called Janet. She recognised Gerald and nodded briskly.

"I saw you last night" she explained. "You are come to see the place and the work. There's a good bit of humanity about us—if you care to look into the windows."

"What are you doing here, if I may ask?"

"I am a rent collector."

She turned into the next house. He heard her voice, sharp, clear, and decisive. He lingered, listening and watching. Yes, she was "speaking up." A sense of incongruity fell upon him. What had the Settlement to do with a thing so very practical as rent collecting? He still pictured to himself a Settlement consisting of groups of amiable people offering tea and cakes and a little music, and giving doles. He listened therefore—the collector was scolding—simply scolding somebody, in good, round unmistakable terms.

She came out, a little flushed with an en-

counter in which she had failed to make the impression she desired.

"Here, Mr. Moorsom," she said, "you want to see something of our folk. You may pay a morning call. There's a ground floor front—I have just left him after the usual row—you might try your hand in here."

"Am I to convert him? He drinks, of course. Am I to convince him as regards the pledge? Has he any other little vices?"

"You will find out for yourself. And you will do just what you please with him. Perhaps you might figure out for yourself the kind of place this would be if a creature like that was let loose, with no one to watch him. But go and see him. Mind, I don't say that he is an average specimen."

She left him, marching along the pavement with an official air as if she were some kind of policeman, as indeed she was. Such an office as hers is a kind of Police of the Interior. The people fell back, making way for her, mostly offering such a greeting as might be tendered by a school boy to his head-master in the old caning days.

Suddenly she remembered something, and turned back.

"You want to see all you can, don't you? Very well, when you've had enough of that . . .

that wretch, who pollutes the air by his very existence——”

Gerald gathered that in the recent scrimmage there had been swear words used.

“You may go on to the next house but one—number five, first floor front—don’t mind the woman on the ground floor back. If she sees you she will beg of you. Don’t give her anything : let her curse you : she makes good money when she likes, and she drinks it all.”

“Yes—but I don’t quite understand.”

“Next house but one on the same side ; first floor front ; there is a second floor, but the roof’s falling in. Go up and see for yourself.”

Gerald hesitated. He felt no interest in any case. Still he had, in a way, promised to see things for himself.

He entered the house. Its front door stood open day and night—was it still on its hinges ? He knocked gently at the front door. There was no reply. He opened it and looked in.

There was a bed lying in one corner ; a kettle stood on the hob ; there was no fire, but the weather was still mild ; a table stood under the window : there were pens and ink and paper : at the table sat a man writing.

He turned round when Gerald appeared ; looked at him rudely for a few moments, then, in a voice not unpleasant, a soft and musical

voice, and with an accent quite unlike that of the street, he said :—

“ I believe that you were not invited to enter. Pray, how long has it been the custom for one gentleman to intrude upon another gentleman’s privacy ? ”

He was a man of fifty-five or thereabouts ; he sat in an armchair ; his right foot was supported by a stool ; a crutch stood against the chair ; he was a cripple with rheumatism. His long hair was white ; his beard was white ; yet neither beard nor hair was venerable, nor did their colour make him look old ; there was a certain youthfulness about his face ; as for the features, they were marked and prominent : it should have been a handsome face. Still it must have been a handsome face once, and even a face of distinction. But there was stamped upon it the brand—it is unmistakable—of a bad life—a course of self-indulgence and of vice. No one can describe this stamp ; painters cannot depict it, save by chance ; poets cannot convey the appearance of it ; no man can say where it lies, or of what it consists ; it is not wholly in the eyes, but partly you may see it there—this man’s eyes were shifty, and they never looked another man in the face ; nor wholly in the forehead, though it is partly there ; nor wholly on the lips, yet it is partly there. A man can bring it upon his own face by

living the life which it commemorates and proves ; there is no other way. Gerald did not read the face in this way, because he took no thought of what the man was, or had been ; only the first sight of this man caused him—he knew not why—to shudder. It was the stamp that he saw and felt—but understood not.

“I was invited by the rent collector to call. I’ve got nothing whatever to say. I apologise, however, for my apparent intrusion.”

“Young gentleman, the fact of living in a squalid place like this does not debar one from the amenities of life.” He spoke as if he enjoyed the sound of his own voice. “Still, as you have apologised ; and as you take apparently some interest in my unfortunate position—you see that I am crippled from the effects of rheumatic gout——”

Gerald made haste to interrupt him. “Pray don’t think that I take the slightest interest in you, or that I am going to give you anything.”

The man turned round and began to swear at him. His command of the lower and more disgraceful verbs, adjectives, and nouns in our language was simply unparalleled. Gerald received the whole with a critical smile.

“Have you done ?” he said, at last. “Very good. You are a credit to the quarter. I think I have never heard the wealth of our tongue

more fully illustrated. Have you anything more to say? or shall I go?"

"You're one of the Settlement fellows, I suppose." The man laughed quite pleasantly. "They all come and try their hand upon me. Jem Crozier——"

"Mr. Crozier, you mean."

"Jem, I mean. He comes now and again for a chat. There's a sweet little cherub comes too, and invites me to Mass—he's a rank Romanist—and to Confession. There is a nice little girl too, she comes sometimes. Ah!" he sighed. "I tell her stories; I like confessing to her; she sighs; she weeps; tears are very becoming with some girls—don't you think so?"

"She shall never come here again, if I can prevent."

"Oh! yes, she will. They all like to get hold of a real, downright wicked man."

"What?"

"A real wicked man. A Rogue. Ask them. They all know the Impenitent. There is no need to pretend—why should I pretend? I'm a Rogue." He paused, for the words to produce their full flavour. "Well—what do you think of me?" he added.

"I am not going to think about you at all. If I catch you in any roguery I shall run you in."

"Well spoken. If I can do you out of anything, I will. Would you like to know what I am doing?"

"No. I have no wish to know what you are doing."

"I live by my wits. I have had to live by my wits for thirty years, more or less. When the daily bread, with the daily drink, depends upon the wits, they straighten out and go to business if they're worth anything—See?"

"I daresay."

"My wits have never deserted me yet—that is, never for long—now and again—I may have had reason to complain——" He looked round the room as if they were guardian angels in waiting but invisible—"not to complain for long."

"They haven't done too much for you."

"There's luck as well as wits—to depend upon. My luck has always been bad. Well, sir, you see before you the king of letter writers. There are some who are more outwardly prosperous, but that is because my luck is against me—always. The king of letter writers. That is what I am. I am now living on the proceeds of my last letter."

"You write begging-letters stuffed with lies."

"Say—with romantic episodes of an imaginary life," the man laughed pleasantly and musically, "not lies—not lies, my young Settlement speci-

men. Short stories which I send to private persons instead of editors—See?”

Gerald grunted. He would not seem to smile lest the fellow's impudence should interpret that response as approval—"You are concocting another romantic episode, I suppose."

"No—No. Not at present." The man turned over his papers ostentatiously. "This is an important job. Such a job as could not be entrusted to a botcher; a job of great delicacy. You see—there's an old friend of mine—we've worked together. He's a fence, and keeps a shop in Clerkenwell. They're going to take over his house to make a school, or something. So I am going to write up his books all over again, just to make out his business worth five times as much as it really is. See? Jobs like these don't come often. In a regular way I'm a begging-letter writer with an address——"

"Shut up," said Gerald. "Of course you are a most villainous person. You are also a great liar. If you really could do all these things you wouldn't be living in this hole. You're only a poor clumsy rogue. You and your *blague*!" He turned to go.

"I say," the man laughed, "don't be in a hurry. You're like Jem Crozier. He blazes away like mad. I don't mind. I was a gentleman once, myself."

"*Blague !* A gentleman's servant, perhaps."

"No—on my honour. I haven't got any, but if I had . . . on my honour I was a gentleman."

"How did you get ruined then?"

"Sixty per cent. Cent. per cent. Two hundred per cent. That's the way."

Gerald knew that way only too well. He did not press the question.

"Have you no friends?"

"If a man lives as I have lived for the past thirty years of his life, for the rest of his life his people pass by on the other side. If you don't believe me, try."

"It's no concern of mine." Gerald had been standing by the door. He opened it.

"Well—but come again—I'm always at home."

"Perhaps I will. Perhaps not. I don't take the least interest in you. Meantime, I leave you to the invention of more lies, Mr. Gentleman Rogue—Let them be good, solid, substantial lies."

CHAPTER VII.

THE DROPPED HAND.

GERALD left this case in a much better temper. The man was interesting if only for his impu-

dence and swagger. Why on earth, however, should Jem Crozier trouble himself about a common rogue—the worst kind of rogue? For such a case there is but one treatment possible: detectives and the man in blue.

There was the second case recommended by the rent collector. The house she had pointed out was a few doors farther on in the same street: it was a poor squalid place. The door here also stood open: this is an indication of a tenement house—the good tenement needs no door. He went in. First floor front, he was told. The stairs were broken, a good many of the steps had disappeared, the banisters were all gone: they had been broken up long since and used for firewood. The proprietor in such cases refuses to replace the missing links of the stairs, because the tenants must at least leave enough for their daily use. Gerald surmounted these difficulties, and knocked at the door.

There was a faint reply. He pushed open the door, the handle of which was gone, and entered.

The room, like all those in the street, was quite small; there was a cupboard beside the fireplace; it was empty, save for a plate or two. The window was shut, and the air was close, as if the window had not been opened since the night; there was no blind or curtain; there was no car-

pet. The whole furniture of the room consisted of a bed with a blanket over it ; a single chair ; on the hob a kettle ; on the mantelshelf a cheap oil lamp, a teapot, and a cup.

On the bed lay a man supine. On the chair sat a woman, her hands clasped over her knee, rocking to and fro. The movement means patience under suffering. An expert would have understood that the room and its occupants spoke of destitution, such as one reads of as occasional—so many deaths of slow starvation in a million—a rare form of the disease called poverty.

The man was advanced in years—between sixty and seventy—bald, save for a few scattered locks over his ears. He was unshaven and white about the chin and cheeks ; his face was thin and drawn ; the expression, like that of the woman, spoke of endurance and of pain. His right hand was placed in a sling ; he was slight in figure, and rather under the middle height.

The woman, apparently older than the man, was clean looking, venerable, neat in her rags : a self-respecting old woman. When Gerald opened the door she looked up with wistful eyes, as if asking whether the goddess Fortune was really about to turn her wheel. This goddess remains to man, even when all the other Olympians seem to have forsaken him. She mocks him, and deludes him, and disappoints him ; but still he cleaves to

her, and still he worships her, and still he hopes for her smile.

The man opened his eyes, half raised his head, but lay back again, as if the effort was too great for him ; and he closed his eyes as if he was no longer in the least anxious about anything that might happen. Anxiety about the future is only possible when the human animal is fed ; when he is starving, it is only possible to think of the present.

"I was told," said Gerald, beginning to realise that for the first time in his life he was standing in the presence of destitution, "that if I called ——" He was unable to finish the sentence ; the sight of this extremity of poverty made him dumb.

"Perhaps you've come with a job," said the old lady. "But his hand dropped again last night."

"What made it drop? What is the matter with you?"

"It's painters' palsy."

"How do you live, then?" he asked bluntly. The woman looked at the teapot.

"You've got no money ; you can do no work."

"Yes, yes," she cried, eagerly. "When his hand is well there's not a better workman anywhere than Burkle."

"But his hand drops. How long are you

going to stay here—starving? Have you no friends — children — relations? Does nobody come to help you?”

“His hand will be well again in a day or two. Then he will go out again and get a job. Burkle’s that strong—”

“Yes, yes, but meantime.”

“Perhaps we shall borrow a bit of something somewhere.”

“What have you had to eat to-day?” She looked at the teapot again. “Only cold tea! Nothing else? This is scandalous. The parish people ought to know.”

“Lift me up,” said the strong man hoarsely.

His wife raised his head, and he sat up on the bed, his feet on the floor. His free hand trembled and shook. His wife held him up.

“If it’s a job——” he said.

“It isn’t a job. I’ve got no work for any one.” He looked about the bare room again; he looked at the couple before him; the woman supporting the man with her frail arms, her patient face, her self-respectful look. His heart was strangely moved with pity. “Tell me,” he said, “have you any prospect at all of getting food for to-day?”

They made no reply.

“Does the parish give you relief?”

“No,” said the man, stoutly. “We are not sunk so low as that.”

"Not the parish," the woman added, softly, but with equal resolution. "Not the parish."

"Why shouldn't you be on the parish? Why don't you go to the workhouse and live there and have done with it?"

"My name, sir, is Burkle"—the man made an effort, which failed, to rise to his feet in order to emphasize the statement. "In this part of London it is a respected name. I was once—if you'll believe me—a master painter. I had a good business, though you wouldn't think so to look at these lodgings. I was a ratepayer. I might have been a churchwarden if I'd chosen."

"He might, indeed," said the old woman.

"How did you get into such a mess as this, then?"

"I fell into difficulties, and I borrowed money to pay my way. Then I got behind with my payments, and the money-lender—my own cousin, he was—would give me no more time."

"Made him bankrupt!" the old woman repeated. "His own cousin! A bad man! A bad man! A man without mercy!"

"Well, and then?" The manner of the man's fall naturally irritated him. Was he always going to hear about money-lenders! "Go on, can't you?"

"Then I became a journeyman and worked in the decorative line for the ships—at Millwall. If you want to see splendid work——"

"Splendid," interrupted his wife.

"Go on board and see for yourself."

"And they always respected him," said his wife, "and they always will."

"I've had to give up that work," the man explained, "because of my hand. Now I look about and take what comes."

"Oh! You wouldn't believe how strong he is," said his wife.

"No Burkle ever yet went to the workhouse," said the man.

"Then, because of your pride—your absurd family pride—you prefer to starve. What is to be done with such people? What is the use of legislation?"

"Sir," the man lifted his head and spoke with greater force than might have been expected, "I don't know what your family may be, nor what your pride in it may be. Mine is that we've lived respectable from father to son; and that we've always died respectable. Lived and died respectable."

"But," Gerald insisted, "if you can't pay your rent you will have to leave this lodging; and if you can't buy food you must starve in the street. You call that respectable?"

The old woman moaned, and sat down on the bed beside her husband. The man stiffened himself; he almost felt equal to standing up. "I

would rather starve in the street," he said, "than go into the House."

Gerald put his finger and thumb in his waistcoat pocket. "It is ridiculous," he said. He drew out his finger and thumb. Between them was a yellow coin. He knew that he was doing a wrong thing. Nothing is worse than the giving of doles; the man ought to be in the House or in the Infirmary. He placed this coin in the old woman's hand without any remark. Her fingers closed upon it; her lips moved inaudibly; the tears came into her eyes. People half starved are in this respect much like people half drunk—they are easily moved; at such times a little thing touches the fount of tears.

"How long are you going to be disabled?" he asked, with the severity of a parish officer, as who should say, "Come, now, what do you mean by it?" Bumble himself might have spoken.

"It is uncertain." The old woman spoke for him.

"You talk about the House"—the man was stung into strength. He could not stand, but with his left hand he held a bed-post, while his wife kept him up on the other side. "What do you know? It's easy for you to say, why don't you go into the House? You've never seen the House. How would you like to be drove like a flock of sheep? How would you like to have

your food weighed for you? How would you like to be set picking oakum, all the same as a gaol bird? How would you like it, if you were nigh upon seventy years of age, to be punished for breaking a rule as if you was a prisoner? How would you like to be bullied by the Master and the Matron, and talked at by the Chaplain and examined by the Guardians?"

"I was thinking of the choice of evils. If you prefer to starve outside, it is your affair, not mine. The laws of the country provide for every case of destitution. No one need suffer. But, of course, if you really like this kind of misery better than the loss of a little imaginary independence——"

"There's worse pains than the pains of hunger." It was the old woman who spoke. "There's worse things to bear than cold; they're in the House, not here."

Gerald looked from one to the other. Perhaps he began to understand that legislation, even with the most beneficent intentions, even like the Poor Law when it tries to make people who are old and poor understand the true wickedness of their condition, may fail and break down before pride and obstinacy.

"Get him some food as quickly as you can," he said, and left them.

Ruined by a money-lender; made bankrupt by

a money-lender, a man without mercy, who would give no time. His father's words came back to him : "Trample—trample—trample !" And his father's history, which was always with him day and night, but sometimes stood out more clearly, now rose up before him like a landscape before rain, rose up in his brain like unto the effigy of Fate brandishing the fiery scorpions. Ruined by a money-lender. How many, like this poor man, cursed the money-lender ? "How was your fortune made ?" asked the voice in his brain.

That morning the fragrance of fried steak returned to the tenement after a long absence. Onions added their incense ; potatoes were boiled ; porter was fetched ; there was a meal—an actual meal. It reminded them of the days of the decorating. The man with his right hand in a sling was able to sit up, and the woman left off clutching her knees, and no more rocked to and fro ; but with a delicious sense of returning housewifery washed up and put away, and crooned an old and long-forgotten tune.

"Old woman," said the man, drowsy with the unwonted feeling of satisfied hunger, "I thought I knew him when he came in ; I thought it was my cousin Isaac, young again. He had just that look of him, without the grab and the grasp in his eyes. Afterwards, he didn't look so much

like him, but at first—well, I shall get about again in a day or two. Perhaps we shall find out who he is, and when I get into work again we can pay him back.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LOST SYMBOL.

GERALD walked away with quickened step. He was a little ashamed of his weakness. Why had he given anything to the man? There was the machinery of the law; there were the parish officers; there was the workhouse, There is no greater folly than to relieve in this casual fashion without inquiry. Yet there they were with a teapot—and nothing else. Why could not these people pocket their ridiculous pride and go into the workhouse, provided for such cases as theirs? The union for paupers and the old and impotent; and for the rogue, such as that Impenitent One, prison—the good old refuge—the only remedy. With this remedy and this refuge the poor should be left to themselves; to shape themselves according to their own necessities.

In this way he put the case to himself; but without complete satisfaction. For such a man as the Impenitent was certainly a danger to the

State, and under existing conditions he cannot be locked up for life, as he should be. And as for the second man, he was unfortunate ; it is hard, on account of misfortune, to sink so low. On the other hand, one cannot avert misfortune ; it falls upon all classes of people, rich and poor alike. His own father's wealth did not avert the paralysis which first crippled him and then killed him.

The street led him into a small triangular place, one side of which was occupied by a little grassy enclosure containing two trees, three square tombs, one headstone, three or four graves, and a cottage of four rooms. The thing was so unexpected and so remarkable that he stopped to look at it. The little burial ground belonged to a humble chapel, and the chapel had been converted into a small house, and what were the tenets of the extinct sect only the dead lying in that enclosure knew.

This halt before the railings was the cause of a discovery—an important discovery, though extremely disagreeable. For next to this little cemetery there stood a small shop belonging to a house with a stuccoed front. Over the front of the house ran an inscription, at the sight of which this young man started and changed colour. It was the very last thing which he looked for ; the thing which he might have feared, but

did not. It was the unexpected, that which always happens.

"George Nobes, Builder & Decorator; Plumbing in all its Branches; Undertaker and Funeral Contractor on Easy terms. Successor to Isaac Moorson. Established 1855."

He read the legend. He then remembered for the first time that he was walking about in the very quarter in which his father had commenced his career: it was here that the Day of Small Things had been successfully encountered; here that the tenements were acquired; here that the rents—the first *coup*—the first real step—were doubled.

"I began," said his father, "as a builder in a small way."

It was here, then. This was his place.

The shop itself was small and neat. The central window was decorated with a model, some two feet long, of a polished oak coffin, handles and brass plates and all complete. At the contemplation of this model and of the picture behind it, representing two mutes in scarves bearing black plumes, Gerald's heart became as heavy as lead, because, for the first time, he realised what the thing meant.

When a boy is brought up with the sense of belonging to the class of authority; when his associates do belong to that class; when it is

assumed that success at Eton, followed by success at the University, will also be followed by success at the Bar or the House, or both, and that a brilliant career is open to him, with the House of Lords at the end of it—that boy's thoughts are apt to flow on in a stream, always growing wider and deeper, to the certain end. That end does not dazzle ; nor does the work before him terrify. Other boys may look forward to their chances of success with anxiety and misgiving ; their ancestors were not accustomed to success ; his were ; what they did, he can do. If no ancestors, observe, then no confidence.

Again. It is a great thing for a young man of the middle class to distinguish himself at the University ; nobody in the family ever did it before ; it lifts that young man at one step to a higher level ; it may be the means of lifting the whole family to a higher level ; it may fill them all with new ambitions. For such a young man as Gerald Moorsom his University success was but a natural episode in the career : he was born to be Captain of Eton ; he was born to be a First Class Classic ; he was born to be a statesman ; he was born to command, to lead, to rise.

And here he was face to face with the paternal shop and the emblem of one branch out of the many with which his father attempted fortune—that of the model coffin.

It was one thing to be told a story which belonged to the past : a story, besides, quite forgotten and buried ; and another thing to be reminded of it in this unexpected manner. Forgotten? Why, it stared one in the face ; it was proclaimed in letters two feet long.

It was one thing again to be told by that poor starveling that he was ruined by a money-lender, and another thing to remember that at the time his father was carrying on business in this very quarter.

The man had spoken of his cousin. Could that miserable wretch really be a cousin of his father—and, therefore, of himself? His cheek flamed ; he tried to assure himself that many people lend money in small sums ; the petty usurer is found everywhere ; it was absurd to find a cousin in every man ruined by an anonymous usurer. Yet the suspicion remained and the uneasiness.

Why, the horrible thing pursued him and persecuted him. That Settlement woman, Helen, found out that he was in trouble ; she would find out next what the trouble was. Stories of money-lenders found him out everywhere ; the gentleman rogue was ruined, he said, by the money-lender ; the unlucky decorator was ruined by a money-lender ; and here before his eyes stood the first home of the great money-lender, his father, who had been the ruin of so many.

While he stood stupidly gazing at the inscription over the house front, the shop door was opened and a sleek elderly man in his shirt-sleeves appeared looking out upon the open area. He was of cheerful, well-fed, well-to-do, self-satisfied aspect, and he sniffed the morning air with satisfaction. The tapping of hammers from within showed that business was brisk.

Gerald crossed the road and saluted him.

"You are Mr. Nobes ; I see a name on your shop front which interests me."

The man started. Why? He started and stepped back. Then he looked at Gerald curiously ; then he replied slowly, and still considering the stranger as if thinking of something else.

"Moorsom, you mean, or Nobes? Moorsom is it? Well, sir, you've come to the right shop for information. For I bought the business of Isaac Moorsom."

"Of Isaac Moorsom? Where did he come from?"

"He was born here and brought up here, not far from this very street. So I suppose he came from here. I bought this business, and I paid for it. In the year 1862 it was. Moorsom had me over it. I'm not blaming Moorsom: he got what he could. But it was never any discredit to be had by Moorsom. A man had to get up early in the morning to have me, but Moorsom

did it. That's business. I don't blame him ; he bested me, and I'd ha' bested him if I could."

"How did he do it?"

"There's ways—business ways—of making a shop look twice as good as it is—Moorsom had me—I bargained, being a fool, to pay him according to his books. Then he lent me money to carry on, intending to get the property back in his own hands. He would have broke me—such was his crafty plan—but he went away. Talk of an eye for business ! Ah ! all of us—pretty well—were in his clutches. But he went away.

"Where is he now?"

"Well, if you don't know—I'm blessed if this isn't a rummy go." He stared and rubbed his chin. "Well, if you don't know, I don't. Dead and buried, very likely. A rich man for sure, living or dead. I have heard that he was once seen in a carriage and pair. But I don't know."

"You seem to admire his business qualities."

"I admire, young gentleman, the man who bested me. Because he's rare. If you ask me what he was as for his character—why—if you don't know—Ho ! ho !" Why did the man laugh and choke ? "I should say that he was a miser and a skinflint ? a scraper and a squeezer ; a robber of such as are fatherless, and a grinder of such as are in a tight place. That's what you would be told, if you don't know. He bound

'em and he ground 'em ; he bound 'em and he ground 'em. Still I must say he was the only man who ever bested me."

So pleased was he with his unwonted rhyming effect that he repeated it : " He bound 'em and he ground 'em. That's what he did."

" A noble reputation, indeed." Gerald's lips wore the semblance of a smile ; but his eyes were troubled. He was listening for more revelations.

" If you didn't know Isaac—well—give him a forked tail and hoofs and ears, and you'd have the devil. But he knew the way to get rich. There are such men. As for you and me, we keep our shops in a honest way, and give and take as between neighbours."

" You don't look as if you were doing badly."

" Perhaps I am not, young man ; and perhaps I am. There's one thing they can't do without"—he pointed to the model in the window—" they must have that. And though you cut it as fine as you please, without feathers and a single horse, there is the job—frequent and regular."

He pointed to the model in the window.

" They must have it. If you hear of Isaac anywhere, send me his address, and I'll go and see him and take him back his books which I've kept ever since waiting to show him."

" Are there any relations of his—brothers—cousins—in this place ? "

"There is one man—I think he's a cousin—his mother was a Moorsom, or else he married a Moorsom."

"Who is he?"

"Well—he *was* something in my line."

"Another *croque-mort*? I mean—another undertaker?"

"No; he was a master painter once. Then he was broke—Isaac broke him. He became a ship's decorator: painted the white and gold saloons for the steamers—you know. But his hand dropped, and he can't paint any more. So he picks up odd jobs and cadges along, being poor but proud. He keeps out of the House; which, as a ratepayer, I admire and encourage. Beautiful it is for a ratepayer and a vestryman to see the struggles of such to save our money. If you want to know anything more about the Moorsoms, young man, go and ask Mr. Burkle. You'll find him a bit haughty, but you'll pass that over when you reflect that he keeps out of the House on cold tea and a crust, and hardly a stick left, in order to save the ratepayers' money,"

"A ship's decorator—with a dropped hand?"

"There's the street—number five or six, anybody will tell you."

"Number five? Dropped hand? Why, that must be the man I have just left."

"His name's Burkle."

“Burkle ! Yes—Burkle—yes.” He repeated the words. He felt as if he were in some horrible nightmare. In one morning he had stumbled upon his father’s original shop and his father’s cousin. We call such a thing coincidence. It seems as if there must be a million to one against it. The odds, however, were nothing like a million to one, because the quarter was that in which his father was born ; because the shop still preserved the name ; and because the man with the dropped hand had attracted the notice of the rent collector. But he stood for a little in silence, thinking over the strangeness and the danger of the thing. “No one can ever find out,” said his father ; “it is a secret between you and me.”

Mr. Nobes laughed : not at the stranger’s amazement, for he was never one to trouble himself about symptoms in other people. He laughed because a pleasant thought occurred to him—a really humorous thought. “I say, Mister”—he put his thought into words—“if I had Isaac Moorson’s funeral, and if I were to conduct that funeral through these streets, you’d be surprised at the respect with which his remains would be received. If you don’t know Isaac—Ho ! ho ! How should you ? Why, you would be surprised, indeed.”

Gerald turned and walked away. The humiliation of that morning will never leave him. For

the first time he understood the truth and reality of the history: the true origin of his wealth. There are some days—some moments—which bite like the engraver's acid into the soul and make a mark that nothing can ever efface. They are moments when pretences and shams and self-deception vanish, and the bare truth horrible in nakedness stands before one. Like Lot's wife, he was fain to turn his head. On the doorstep stood Mr. Nobes, and beside him his wife.

"Missus," said Mr. Nobes, "look after that young chap. See! he turns his head. What do you make of him?"

"Mercy, George! He's the very image of Isaac Moorsom, when he was young. Who is he?"

"I don't know. He's got something to do with Isaac, I'll swear. And I reckon he's just heard what we may call something to his own advantage."

Gerald did not hear what they said. He had turned back to look once more at the model coffin.

"It should be my crest," he said bitterly—"a coffin proper for crest, with three death's heads argent and a bend sable for a shield. For supporters—say two mutes in black scarves and hatbands, carrying black wands with nodding plumes."

CHAPTER IX.

THE BOYS' CLUB.

A DINNER at the Settlement cannot be called a banquet even by its best friends. It is a short and simple meal, and when it is over the members separate, and all go off for their evening work.

"Now," said Jem, "you've had all the morning to yourself, Gerald. Have you made many discoveries?"

"I have made one or two discoveries which were unexpected, at least." So far, he was safe.

"Well, then, you've got to give your evening to me. Come along."

"We are going," he said, "to the Boys' Club. It isn't exactly the kind of club that you belong to. They are not well-behaved boys nor refined boys: they are the boys who are brought up to nothing except to hang about and look for odd jobs. Some of them are the Hooligans of the place. Their great delight is in fighting: they fight each other: they fight the stranger within their gates: they form bands and companies for fighting. So, in our club, we practise the noble art of self-defence every evening."

"What! You encourage them in brutality?"

"Not at all. We convert brutality into or-

dered skill, and make fighting a game conducted according to rules. The lad who puts on the gloves is ashamed of fighting with belts and sticks and knives. He is out of conceit with the savagery of his old methods. See! In the same way the duello abolished private lurking in dark corners with a knife. Nothing like making a thing bad form."

He led the way through the streets till they came to a house much larger than the others : there were lights in some of the windows, and the ground floor was even brilliantly illuminated.

"There !" said Jem with pride ; " that's the doss-house and the club. It used to be a common lodging-house, and it was a den—it was, indeed. Likewise a Pigsty—and the haunt of Devils seventy times seven. Well, we bought it and took it over. And now it's as clean a doss-house—at fourpence a night—as you could wish : and the ground floor is the boys' club, and the back garden is the club gymnasium. And now you can come in and see for yourself."

The room was tolerably spacious and lofty. There were movable benches which could be placed against the walls or round the big blazing fireplace. There was a bagatelle-board in one corner. On the walls hung pictures of battle pieces ; portraits of heroes --- Nelson, Gordon, Grace Darling ; pictures of great deeds—the sol-

diers facing death in line without one falling out of the ranks while the ship went down ; the girl saving the children in the fire at the sacrifice of her own life ; and others. Between and under the pictures hung boxing-gloves and single-sticks.

The club was assembling : the lads, clean-washed for the evening, were flocking in : they stood aside to make way for " Mister Jem " and his friend. He passed through them with a word and a nod to one or the other.

" This is our big room," he said. " Sometimes we have a little sing-song here—sometimes we have readings : mostly we put on the gloves and handle the sticks. In the court beyond"—he passed through the opposite door into a square enclosure, asphalted and covered in with a great sky-light—" is our gymnasium. You see, we are not so large or so well furnished as some, but we get along." There were already two or three of the fellows, their coats off, trying the rings of iron which hung round the room. " Now"—Jem swept the horizon, so to speak—" is it better that these lads should be collected here for two or three hours every evening under some kind of order, or that they should hang about street corners, hustling passers by, drinking at the public-houses, or walking about the streets keeping company ? "

"I should leave them to find out for themselves," said Gerald.

"No, you wouldn't, old man. Only something has rubbed against the grain which makes you contrary. Now I will show you how we take the devil out of these fellows."

He took off his own coat, and appeared dressed in grey flannels.

"In this place," he said, "it isn't enough to show the way. We must lead the way. They wouldn't think much of me if I couldn't do as much with the bars and the rings as themselves; and if I couldn't meet the best of them with the gloves, they wouldn't stay long in the club."

After a little discussion among themselves, the lads picked out two who stripped and took the gloves. The others formed a ring and the fight began.

"Now you'll see," said Jem, "how they drive out the devil. You will also observe that we are sticklers for the rules of the game."

Gerald further observed that the use of the gloves does not interfere with the reality of a fight. If these lads had been professional boxers, they could not have been more in earnest. The fight was limited to ten minutes, with as many rounds as could be crammed into that period. "If we let them fight it out," Jem explained,

"the devil would come back again reinforced. As it is, they have a breather and a lesson in law and courtesy—you see how they shake hands at the beginning and the end—and they haven't time to be beaten badly."

In the background, Gerald observed a young fellow who towered above the rest, being over six feet in height, and broad in the shoulders. The others lads were mostly undersized, though wiry and active.

He stepped forward. "Our turn now, Mister Jem."

"Our turn it is," said Jem cheerfully. "Gerald, this is our champion—George the Slogger he is called. We do a little friendly turn most nights, don't we, George?"

George grinned. But when he stood up, face to face with his antagonist, he neither laughed nor smiled. He was perfectly serious, as anxious as a whist-player; as serious as one who contemplates a coming checkmate; as serious as a man before an after-dinner speech. His features were clean cut, and had a character of distinction lacking in the faces of his companions. One of his eyes still showed the signs of the last encounter: his hair was cut short: his arms were curiously long: his chest was deep, his shoulders square. His antagonist was less in height, but of stronger build and of greater skill. The time limit, in

this encounter, was necessary because the Slogger fought to win.

They shook hands, and the combat began.

.

Jem put on his coat. "Ten minutes is quite enough of you, George. Some day I shall not be able to come up to time."

"Then I'll challenge the Shadwell butcher," said George, hopefully.

"Now I'll show you the doss-house." There was another entrance to the place—that used by the lodgers.

It was nine o'clock. The common room, a long and low room on the first floor, was already pretty full of men. A large fire was burning at the end of the room, and cooking by means of a grill and frying-pan was going on.

"They can bring supper if they like," said Jem. "Come upstairs." The rooms overhead were furnished with beds and blankets. There were also cubicles for those who could pay sixpence.

"Does it want a Settlement to provide a cheap lodging-house?" asked the Doubter.

"It wants a Settlement to get the place run for its working expenses alone and to keep it clean. Formerly, it was never cleaned at all. Now, it is washed and scrubbed nearly every day. There is no end to the washing."

"You give them a clean lodging. Well—when you go away, they will go back to the pigsty."

"We look after them as well. And we are not going away. We find out who they are, and what they can do. We keep a register for them : we are in touch with some of the railways : we get some to go abroad : we get the young fellows to enlist——"

"You could pay a man to do all this for you."

"No, Gerald, you are wrong. We could pay a man to carry out rules : we could not pay a man to do what we do ourselves. The only paid service in this kind of work that is worth anything is the wage that barely finds a living. That is the real strength of the Salvation Army. Nobody can make any money out of it. Nobody can live in luxury on their pay. And in the Settlement the real strength is the voluntary work of people like our own."

"If one could believe that on this multitude your efforts could produce any effect !"

"You do not understand—how should you?—the enormous value of a single lad—of one among the many. Take that tall fellow, George the Slogger—he's the son of a rogue—a begging-letter writer—an impostor who says he was once a gentleman. What is the lad to become? He regards imposture as a natural thing to attempt

—his father lives by it. Is he to become a criminal? Look at the fellow. Think of that strength and courage enlisted in the criminal ranks. Can we make anything better? Well, old man, I am trying. It is difficult, but not hopeless.”

“The families of habitual criminals have a tendency to die out, I believe.”

“Perhaps. Their vices kill them off. Meantime, they make more criminals. Now we’ll go home and have a pipe.”

“There is a curious kind of tradition or history about this place,” said Jem, as they walked home.

“I’ve struck it half a dozen times. So has Helen, she tells me. It is a story of a money-lender, who seems to have been a kind of Minotaur, devouring the helpless and the innocent. Whether he ever existed or not, I don’t know. Perhaps there is something grand in pretending to have been ruined by a money-lender : at the same time, the achievements of this mythical hero, or Loathly Worm, are really prodigious. He bought up whole streets and raised the rents : he kept on raising the rents : he charged huge sums for the ‘key,’ which is a kind of fine on taking possession ; he lent money to the small tradesman and sold him up. He really seems to have been a wrecker of quite the old established form.”

Gerald made no reply. He restrained himself from an impatient word. Was there to be no respite? Was he to be haunted and followed everywhere by the memories of the money-lender?

CHAPTER X.

GLORY.

"HERE is our Girls' Club." It was one of the common tenement houses, distinguished only by the blinds, and curtains in the windows. "We'll look in, if you like. It is time for breaking up."

Gerald followed with resignation. By this time he saw men "as trees walking." The human procession passed before his eyes but made no impression on his mind, which was now entirely occupied with the persecution of Fate.

The girls' club, now closing for the night, consisted of two rooms. In one of them was a piano: the floor, in front, was cleared for the girls to dance. They danced with each other, a way not generally preferred in other circles, but followed by them because the lads are better with the gloves than at the saraband. They danced every evening as the boys boxed—to drive out the restlessness: when they were not dancing

they sang songs in parts or in unison : they sat about and talked : they looked at the pictures in the illustrated magazines : they took elementary lessons in needlework or in cooking : they talked over their private affairs. They were about forty in number. They presented, as Gerald first saw them, a company of sturdy and independent girls, the greater number strong and well nourished, mostly short and sturdy, with the usual exceptions of two or three anæmic girls.

Two of the members of the Settlement were present—Helen and the girl who had undertaken this work and ran the club every night. She was the slight and fragile girl whom we have already seen in a despondent mood. To-night she was again bright and cheerful : the evening, which was always more or less of a lottery, had passed off well : the girls had been amenable to reason, even affectionate and confiding :

Helen looked at Gerald. His face betokened no kind of interest whatever in the place or the girls.

“ It has been an unfortunate day for us,” she said.

He started. “ Why ? ”

“ Because nothing that you have seen or heard has been able to touch you. It is shown in your face. It seems a pity to take the trouble of going round at all.”

"Indeed, I begin to think so. I wish I had not gone round."

"There is something between you and us."

"Things are strange to him," said Jem, making excuses. "When he realises what they mean—"

"Thank you, Jem." Gerald essayed a smile. "All I understand is that you are taking a vast amount of trouble. I only hope you will be rewarded by some return."

"There is always a return," said Helen, "though we cannot see it."

"Faith finds the return. Is it always invisible to the outside mind?"

"Sometimes we do see a return. I remember these girls when we came among them. They are wild and shy creatures still, but they were once far more shy and more wild. It was not uncommon for them to drink too much, and it was not thought in the least shameful to be drunk. Now at least they are ashamed if such a thing ever happens. I think we have not had a case of a girl coming drunk for more than a year."

"That is certainly something."

"It means a great deal more than the reform of this small company," Helen explained—"it means the creation of some public opinion. The longer I live among these people, the more I understand the enormous value of public opinion and the power of example."

It was certainly unfortunate that just then the exception should occur which proves the rule.

The girls were putting on their hats and going away : there were only half-a-dozen left. There was heard the raising of voices at the street door. "Don't let her in : carry her away. Come, Glory, don't try to go in." Then a girl burst in—her cheeks aflame, her arms flying, her hair loose, without hat or bonnet—laughing and crying hysterically.

"It's Glory !" said Beatrice. "And oh ! Helen, she has been drinking !"

She had, indeed. That was a thing not to be concealed or denied.

She began to sing some music-hall refrain, but broke down and fell into a chair, dropping her head into her hands.

"You see, Gerald," said Jem, "it is not all plain sailing. We have these outbreaks."

"The return," he would have suggested, but the pain and trouble in the faces of the two ladies restrained him.

The girls came back. "Miss Wentworth, it's a shame," said one. "The boys have been giving her drink. Her chap's outside."

"Is he outside ? Call him in."

The chap came in. It was the champion boxer, the youth with the long arms and the lithe figure.

"You, George?" asked Jem. "Is this your girl?"

"It's my girl—we're going to be married on Sunday. Come, then. What yer got to say to that? Married. The boys were just treating her to a drop for good luck, when she began screaming and ran away—and me after her. I didn't know she was boozed."

"Did you give her the drink?" asked Helen.

"Not me. I was at the club. I come along after. Come, Glory, wake up!"

They looked on in silence. There was nothing to say. Some of the lads, out of friendship to their pal, had given the drink to his girl—the girl he was going to marry on Sunday. That was all. She was overcome. There was nothing more to say.

"Come, Glory, wake up!" She did not move.

The lad put his strong arms round her waist and lifted her as one would lift a child, throwing her head over his shoulder. Indeed, she was little more than a child.

"She's my girl," he said, with defiant eyes. "I'll carry her home to her mother. On Sunday we're going to be married!"

The evening was concluded. There were no more sights to be seen. Jem took Gerald's arm and led him out. The streets were full of peo-

ple : the children, who ought to have been in bed, were on the doorsteps falling asleep : they crossed the main street where the trams were running up and down. The shops were open : young fellows with girls walked along smoking cigarettes : other girls arm in arm, four abreast, walked and ran singing and laughing.

"Return or no return," said Jem, "you must acknowledge, Gerald, that there is plenty of room for improvement."

"I have not denied it."

They repaired straight to Jem's room.

"This young couple," Gerald said, presently, "will give you, I should say, a good deal of pleasant work."

"Don't, old man. It fairly knocks me over. I knew nothing about it. This keeping company and the early marriages—they are the curse of the place ; they are worse than the drink : worse than the language : worse than the dirt : worse than anything. That poor lad ! What can I do for him now ? He is twenty and she is seventeen at most, and looks fifteen. We try to prevent these things with our clubs, by giving them something to think about. Yet, you see—they go on—just the same. The misery of it !"

Jem's cheerful face fell. He pulled hard at his pipe : the problem of the early marriage was too much for him.

"You don't respond, old man," he said. "Of course you don't know that poor chap as I do. Well—I hoped to have you on the Bench of Repentance long before this. You look gloomy. You take a gloomy view of things. What is it? Are you in love? You can't be hard up?"

Gerald got up. "I think," he said, "that I will go to bed. You've given me, between you, something to think about. It isn't Repentance," he added, "that you may expect. It's something—without a name—the exact opposite."

Gerald went to bed. His room looked upon the street. Although it was close upon midnight people were still about. There was quarrelling : there were sounds of fighting : a woman screamed "murder" : there were running footsteps as of flight.

He got up and threw open his window and looked down upon the dimly lighted street and the moving figures below.

A day of humiliation unspeakable, followed by a night of rebuke and rebellion. Accident—he would not call it Fate—or the hand of Providence—had led him to the very scene of his father's beginnings : the place where he first practised his theory of the Trampler and the Devourer : he had actually found a cousin—a cousin who was a pauper, and he had found the place still full of traditions and memories and

execrations of his father's name. Truly the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. How could he wipe out the stain of that shameful story?

He sat at the open window considering these things with a dreadful anticipation of more discoveries and new shames, while the street grew quieter and the last footstep died away, until the cold October air had chilled him through and through, and he was fain to lie down and suffer weariness at last to lull his pain to sleep.

CHAPTER XI.

BEFORE THE BEAK.

GERALD was roughly awakened, after a short night's rest, at eight in the morning. Jem stood at his bedside, impatiently shaking him out of slumber.

"Wake up, old man," he cried, impatiently. "There's a chance for you."

"A chance? What kind of chance?"

"Last night there was a row."

"I heard more than one."

"And a policeman got knocked about. Now, when a policeman gets the worst of it, somebody

pays. They've run in half-a-dozen of the chaps, and among them my young friend George, and they're going to swear that he was in the thick of it."

"The long-armed?—the fortunate lover?"

"Yes. They'll be brought up before the beak in Arbour Square about eleven o'clock. I've seen the lad. He's in the lock-up. He swears that he was not in it. Says that he went straight to bed. You remember how he carried off his girl last night. That was about half-past ten. The scrimmage happened between eleven and twelve. He had to carry her home—she lives with her mother about half-a-mile from the club; it's not possible even for a strong young fellow to carry a girl for half-a-mile in five minutes. Glory is a lightweight, but still not far off eight stone, I should think. There certainly might be time for him to get back and to join the fellows scouring the streets before the police appeared; they seem to be all pals together; but they were in possession of the street and terrorising the place much earlier. On the whole I believe the fellow all the more because he does not profess the least condemnation of the crime. To bash a copper is, on the contrary—well——"

"But where is my chance?"

"Why, you're a barrister. Get up; send for your wig and gown—our lawyer will be your

solicitor, and instruct you. Go into court and defend him."

"I am not at the Criminal Bar. Besides, why should I defend him? I don't care twopence whether the fellow is convicted or not."

"But I do. You're going to defend him because I ask you. And you're going to defend him, old man, because though you've turned as cross-grained as a bear, you won't let a lad be ruined for life if you can help it. Come now."

"If you put it that way," said Gerald, sticking out a foot, "of course——"

"Of course. Here, write a note for your clerk in Chambers. There's time to send a messenger to the Temple and back. Then dress as fast as you can, and we'll all go and see the fellow."

"It's a turning-point," Jem explained as they hurried through breakfast. "If that chap is sent to prison it's all up with the rest of his life, and with the lives of Heaven knows how many children and grandchildren. Look here. George has done pretty well so far. He's never been in trouble, and he's what they call a 'Royal,' that is, he's a preference man at the Docks. He is tall and active, and before long he will be as strong as any two men. He is certain to become a permanent hand. He is sharp; he may rise and become an official of some kind. But for

that he will require character. Then he will change his tenement room for a cottage at Forest Gate, and he will bring up his children to trades. See? There we have generation after generation of honest folk—the backbone of the country. Have another egg. It's a London egg, with a full rich flavour—do have it. Well, what if he gets sent to prison? It's a bad case: the policeman is in the Infirmary getting mended; he and the others who rescued him are sure to be vindictive. It's a very bad case: the magistrate will exercise his full powers; they will all go off to prison, if they are not committed for trial. When he comes out of prison, he may, or he may not, be taken on again. Perhaps you know what our lovely prison system does for a man. It breaks him up. George will come out physically weakened and mentally cowed and crushed. It is true that at the Docks they don't ask for character, but they do look for strength. If he doesn't get taken on again, he will become a hanger-on, like so many others. As for his wife—what will that poor little animal, Glory, do?" he turned to Helen.

"She will live like her husband from day to day. She will have an enormous number of children; they will mostly die, and those who live will join the class in which they have been brought up, to waste, and destroy, and to drag

down. I hope you may be able to prevent this dreadful chain of events, Mr. Moorsom."

Arbour Square Court is always well filled, every morning, with the friends of the prisoners. They come to swear that the prisoner was otherwise occupied at the time when the alleged crime was committed. Or, if that is of no avail, they attend to show their sympathy, to applaud the gallant and fearless bearing of the accused, and to take a critical view of the case as conducted by magistrate, witnesses, and defence.

The disorderly cases are first disposed of. Then follow the more serious charges. They are generally defended by the solicitors whose practice is in the Courts. These gentlemen have achieved a local reputation, and, like their brethren in the upper branch, their fees vary with that reputation, though for the guineas of the High Court of Justice they read half-crowns.

It is unusual in this Court for a barrister to appear. Therefore the sight of a wig and gown caused the greatest interest and astonishment.

When the case was called, seven prisoners were named, one of them being called John George. They marched in one after the other, and stood in a line in the dock, the last being the young champion. They were all lads from sixteen to twenty. The appearance of the Slogger

seemed to mark him as of another class. The other six were of a perfectly common type : their features coarse and undefined, their faces lowering ; they stood as they walked, slouching ; they looked like cattle in a pen, George for his part, six inches taller than any of them, stood by their side, unabashed, like them, by his position—perhaps in the consciousness of innocence—but, unlike them, alert and watchful.

Gerald rose in his place. “ I appear, sir, for the prisoner called George.”

“ And I,” said one of the solicitors in Court, “ for the other six.” They had clubbed their money, and retained the most popular of the advocates for the defence of all. The case was simple. Early in the evening a company of lads had taken possession of a certain street ; here they amused themselves with a kind of sport which is extremely ancient, yet not recognised by the law. The Danes, when they first came over to occupy the land, had many such sports by which to beguile the winter evenings. Their favourite game was the throwing of beef bones at each other, large and heavy bones with sharp or jagged edges, bones which crushed into a man’s skull and killed him if he failed to dodge. It was essentially a winter-evening game with the followers of the great King Sweyn. The game of these lads was not unlike the bone-throwing : they paraded the

street with shouts and war-cries ; they were armed with sticks, leather belts, stones in handkerchiefs, and knives : some even carried, ostentatiously, small revolvers ; they linked arm in arm and rushed the street, they hustled, knocked down, and kicked everyone who did not clear out of their way. When they had carried on this game for some time, the policeman came into the street, expecting, perhaps, deference to the law. Did he get any deference ? Not at all. The dauntless Hooligans were upon him at once ; they hustled, they knocked down, they kicked that policeman ; other policemen came to his assistance ; there was a short but an unequal fight ; the warriors, defeated, were arrested either on the spot or in flight when the way of war went against them.

The witnesses were the policemen engaged and wounded in the battle. Their evidence was firm and straightforward and unanimous. Four of the lads were captured red-handed—that is to say, in the thick of the fight. The defence was that they had arrived casually and were not fighting at all. Two were captured as they ran away : the policemen swore that they were also in the fight and were making off. It was advanced for the defence that they had had nothing to do with the battle ; that they had not been in the street at all ; that they did not belong to the

company ; and that they were peacefully walking home with their little sisters. All this was stoutly sworn by the lads themselves and by their friends. On the other hand, the police proved that they did belong to the gang ; that they had previously been convicted ; and that they were caught running away, and not walking with their little sisters ; and, further, that they still bore visible marks of the fray in bruises and broken heads and torn shirts.

The case of George was different. It was admitted that he was not running, but either walking or standing still ; it was also admitted that he had no weapon of any kind, and that he bore no marks of battle. On the other hand, the police swore positively that he had been with them.

Now Gerald had never been in a police court before, nor had he ever conducted a case of any kind in any court. However, it was his chance, and he rose to the occasion. He had his witnesses, and those of an undeniable kind, and he called them. The Honourable James Crozier deposed that the prisoner had spent the evening till past ten o'clock at the Boys' Club. Now at that time the sports of the Hooligans were at their height. Miss Helen Wentworth deposed that at half-past ten the prisoner came to the Girls' Club, and that he carried away in his arms

a girl who had been brought in overcome with drink. The girl Glory gave evidence as to the position of her lodgings, and the distance from the club and from the scene of the battle. Lastly, the young fellow called Robbie testified that he had seen George arrested ; that he was not running away, but looking on ; and that two of the prisoners, whom he pointed out, were actually running away.

The policemen, however, stuck to their guns. George had been seen among the combatants.

Counsel for the defence drew from them an admission that the battle was fierce ; that truncheons had been freely used ; that every one of the prisoners was more or less damaged ; and that this prisoner alone showed no signs of the fray ; that there was no proof that he belonged to the gang ; and that there were no previous convictions against him.

Gerald further laid before the magistrate a small map showing the position and the distances from the scene of battle, of the Girls' Club, and of this one girl's home : he made the policemen acknowledge that with every allowance for the strength and activity of the prisoner, it would be impossible for him to get his charge carried home, and to walk or run to the position held by the Hooligans in time to take much part in a fight or a riot which lasted for two hours.

He further elicited the admission that had George struck in for the last act, so to speak, of the fray, he would have produced a considerable individual impression upon the police, and would certainly show in the dock indelible evidence as to the severity and reality of the row. Finally he made his unwilling witness allow that he might have been mistaken.

Gerald's speech for the defence was brief ; he argued that while it was not impossible for the prisoner to carry the girl home and to join the band in time for the final fight, it would be difficult to cover the ground in the time ; and that it was absolutely impossible, considering his stature, his strength, and his skill in boxing, which was well known, that he should have fought without producing a considerable individual impression. Where Hector fought, where Ajax stood, there was the battle fiercest and most prolonged. In this case, he said, Hector did not even survey the fight. Finally he called attention to the admissions of the evidence.

The magistrate promptly acquitted this prisoner, who stepped out of the dock with alacrity, to be embraced by the girl Glory in the presence of the whole court. The others, despite the most gallant perjuries, were committed for trial, and were carried off with defiant words and brazen faces in the vehicle called affectionately Black

Maria. It is this vehicle's peculiar property that everyone who has once travelled in her can never get the fame and report of that journey forgotten during the whole term of his natural life.

"There!" said Gerald, with some elation, "I've done it. Are you satisfied, Jem?"

"You did it so well that you ought to be an Old Bailey barrister. Where's George?"

George was making off for the nearest public-house with Glory and a few friends. Jem ran after them.

"Come back," he cried, "and thank Mr. Moorsom, who got you off. And then you will both come with me and have some breakfast. Glory, my girl, wasn't last night's business a warning?"

George held out his hand. "Thank you, sir," he said. "You got me off proper. Them coppers will swear anything. I wish I had my heel on their heads."

Jem carried off the pair in triumph. Already he saw before him whole generations of honesty owing their existence and their position entirely to this acquittal. Gerald was going back with them when he was accosted by the Impenitent One, hobbling along on his crutches.

"I was in the court," he said, "though you did not see me. Mr. Moorsom, I think, is your name."

"Certainly."

"Quite so—quite so." The man looked embarrassed. "Quite so," he repeated. "Curious that you, of all men in the world, should have got off that boy of mine. I can't say myself that I was astonished to hear that he was pinched. In fact, I've been pinched myself, now and again. It comes very easy, as one may say. Moreover, the boy is not picksome as to his companions. But it's better for his future prospects that he should not be run in."

"That is the general opinion."

"Better for his profession. He will make a fine bruiser, I believe, and a reputation for honesty helps a bruiser wonderfully. You see, it enables him to fight on the cross without being suspected. That's an advantage."

"Is it?"

"You see, Mr. Moorsom—your name is Moorsom, I believe—there's money in fighting on the square, but more in fighting on the cross."

"Now, Mr.—I don't know your name—parent of George, I told you the other day that I am not in the least interested."

"No? no? Well, I could show you in five minutes reasons why you should take the deepest interest in me. Not just now, however. Jem
——"

"Mr. Crozier, you mean——"

“Jem, I mean. He wants George to rise in the world. Rise in the world! Who ever heard of a docker rising in the world? What sort of rise? And how long before he could get back to where his grandfather started?”

The man hobbled slowly away. Gerald looked after him. He had been a gentleman then. By what sins—by what follies—by what self-indulgence had he been dragged down so low?

If we could trace our descent, which only a few can do, what an historical table, what a treasure-house of family vicissitudes it would present! You, dear reader, have perhaps three generations of black-coated respectability; four are unusual; five or six are very rare; two are not so common as one. The middle class is always sending out shoots into the air and branches trailing on the ground; its members are always going up or down. What was there before the first known black coat? You do not know. Perhaps the gutter. What before the gutter? You do not know. Perhaps the coat-of-arms and the old family of repute. It is easier to fall than to rise. If a family sinks into the gutter, there it remains while the memory of the higher place is lost; and if it should rise it will be for the creation of a new family. Consider the case of this young fellow, the docker, the “Royal.” He was certainly born and bred as low down as any can go;

he knew nothing of his people save that his father boasted himself to be a gentleman. Under the most favourable conditions his son might become a craftsman, his grandson a master, his great-grandson a member of some profession; it would take four generations for that family to lift itself again to the point where a new family would begin.

Gerald began these wholesome meditations with reference to the Slogger. He continued them with reference to himself. And his interest in the case vanished, and his elation began to vanish, and the old cloud arose again and threatened to spread over the sky.

CHAPTER XII.

MORE LIGHT.

"You have been with us now," said Helen, "three days. It is now the fourth day. Do you think a little better of us? I think you do. Yesterday you went out of your way to defend a lad in court. Why? There are police and magistrates provided; there is law; there are solicitors practising in the court. A whole machinery is ready for the protection or the

punishment of the prisoner. Yet you took upon yourself to defend him. It was dead against your own principles, Mr. Moorsom."

"Perhaps. Yet—to oblige Jem."

They were sitting in the drawing-room alone in the forenoon. Gerald, shaken out of himself by the unwonted excitement of the trial, and not yet wholly relapsed into gloom, was in a mood open to influence. It is a mood which is subject to sudden changes. At a single word it may melt into sympathy or harden into apathy. It was a mood only possible to Gerald when he could forget for awhile the chains of his false position. It was horrible that the whole truth should be discovered by his friends, and it was disgraceful that he should conceal the truth, and still more disgraceful that he should be afraid of discovery; it was shameful to feel that he was enjoying the wealth procured in such a manner as to make his father's name a by-word, and a proverb, and a tradition, as Jem told him, as of a Minotaur or Loathly Worm, devouring—rending—destroying.

"I think," Helen went on after a pause, "that you have learned something in the last two or three days, Mr. Moorsom."

"I have learned perhaps more than I expected," he replied, with a double meaning.

"You have seen the kind of work we attempt,

and the people we have to deal with. Perhaps you are not yet convinced that our work is solid. There is another side, Mr. Moorsom. I want you to look at that side also : it is the effect of this work upon the workers."

"Yes?"

"You have known Jem, he says, most of his life. What was he at school and at Cambridge? Oh! I know; he was always a gentleman in the best sense. What were his pursuits? What were his aims?"

"He was born to be a country gentleman, and in course of time a peer. He had the pursuits of the country. He hunted, he fished, he played cricket, he rowed. What else should he do?"

"What does he do now? Where are his thoughts? Tell me, Mr. Moorsom, is your old friend the better or the worse since he began to find out that he is his brother's keeper?"

"He is greatly changed—if you please to call it so—he is changed for the better."

"It is with him as with the rest of our people. Let me say of them all, Mr. Moorsom, that as they are working for the place and the people, the old crust of self-will and self-seeking falls off. It is not a sacrifice, or a renunciation, or anything but the supreme happiness that life has to offer when one of them is able to give himself altogether and wholly to his work among us. Most

of the members can only give their evenings and their Sundays and their holidays. But some can give all. Their old ambitions are flung aside, they are forgotten."

Gerald made no reply. There was no need for any reply.

"You did yesterday," Helen went on, "exactly what we are all of us doing. You took up the single case. We have classes and clubs and meetings of all kinds. We seem to be lost in the crowd, but all the time we are in pursuit of the single case. We move heaven and earth to compass a single conversion."

"What do you do with your convert?"

"He becomes an unconscious missionary. The Settlement, Mr. Moorsom, is but a small thing, a very small thing among this multitude; but suppose it sends out, year after year, young people who have been taught or persuaded to lead a high life—not the highest possible—not your ideal, perhaps—but higher than they knew before. Do you not understand how it might become in a short time a mighty factor?"

"On your supposition—certainly."

"It is your ambition to become a statesman. Is it for the good of the people or for your own distinction?"

"For my own distinction," he replied boldly. "If a man passes good laws he advances the

people. But he works for his own distinction."

"Sometimes, perhaps. It is hard to assign motives; and they are mixed. But laws can never raise a nation's standards; they can repress, they can prohibit, they can punish, they can indicate the standards of the time. The nation is raised by the leaven of righteousness that works within. Perhaps, Mr. Moorsom, there is even greater distinction to be won, when your very name remains unknown, by joining this unseen leaven than by standing out in the front before all the world."

"Distinction? What distinction?"

"The distinction—to yourself—of the higher level. Oh! Mr. Moorsom, it is the old, old story. What you give that shall you receive. As is your work so shall be your wage. And tenfold — twentyfold a — hundredfold. From generation to generation his work follows a man and grows—and grows—either for good or for evil."

"You talk in what, to me, is a foreign language."

Helen paid no attention to the objection.

"Here we live amid the fruits of evil. Look at these poor creatures of the streets; they reap one harvest and they are sowing the seeds of another. What if your father had been like

theirs, as destitute of all that makes the world tolerable—love and pity and sympathy?" Her eyes filled with tears. She did not observe the troubled cloud that suddenly passed over her companion's face. "Down here you can see the working of the great Law in its most elementary form: the sickly children, the drink madness, the perverted morals, the animal overpowering the human, the selfishness and the hardness. If you do not believe in retribution for iniquity, Mr. Moorsom, stay with us and learn with us what it means."

"Retribution? You are always talking of retribution."

"You may see also how even retribution may become a blessing. You will find, even here, amid their poverty and their evil life, flowers of loyalty and love and self-sacrifice, especially among the girls."

He was still, I have said, in the mood when one is open to influence. This woman, with her eyes, her voice, her face, her presence, moved him even against his will.

"If it were true," he said. "If it were true; but it is absurd. Why should the children suffer from the vices or the ignorance of their fathers?"

"Because it is the universal law. There is no other answer. As it is with the physical so it is with the spiritual world. We are cripples; we

are consumptives ; we are drink-possessed ; we are insane ; we are morally perverted—why ? Because our fathers have broken the law. There is no escape,” she laid her hand on his—“no escape,” she repeated. “As your father sowed—so shall you reap. There is no escape.”

Then his heart sank cold and heavy as lead. She was speaking in a strange tongue ; she was propounding a doctrine—one on which he had never bestowed a thought. Yet he understood it. There was no escape. Then what would be his own harvest ? What was his own inheritance ?

“Let us go back,” said Helen, “to the case of the boy whose cause you pleaded. You know his father, Jem tells me.”

“I have talked with the villain.”

“He is that worst kind of all—the man whose vices have dragged him down from the position of a gentleman. I believe that he really was once a gentleman.”

“You are thinking of the son’s heritage ? ”

“Yes ; but I do not know the whole of it. His present position—the absolute impossibility that he can ever rise to the position that his father threw away—is only a part of it.”

There was a gentle tap at the door. It was opened, and the girl Glory herself, of whose lover they were talking, looked in.

"This is a part of the boy's inheritance," Helen said. Then she turned to the girl: "Come in, Glory, my dear. Do you want me for anything?"

Glory looked smaller and younger in the morning. She was really intended by Nature for a lovely maiden—had Nature ever found a chance of carrying out her intention. Poor food, late hours, bad air, close confinement to work, stood in the way of her natural development. The figure was slight and her stature small, but the light brown hair was abundant, and her eyes were blue.

She ran across the room. "Miss Helen," she said, "I want you to see my frock for Sunday, and my hat. May I bring them to the club to-night?"

"To be sure, my dear. Glory, this is the gentleman who defended George."

"I know." She offered him a hand of friendship. "You done it proper, too. If you'd defended all the lot, they'd ha' got off too."

"No; they were all guilty."

"They'll all want you to defend them now," said Glory. "Why, it seemed as if the Beak did everything you told him."

"An obedient Beak, was he not?"

"If ever you was pinched," said Glory, addressing Gerald, "you'd see what George would do!"

"She means," Helen explained, "that George is grateful."

"Yes," said Glory, "George is grateful, and so am I—and so we ought to be. For if it hadn't been for you, he'd have been in prison now, and I couldn't be married on Sunday."

"George is employed at the docks, isn't he?"

"He's a Royal. He's the youngest chap they've ever taken on as a Royal. That's because he's so big and so strong. When he's a bit older, they'll make him a Permanent; then it's good money all the year round."

"Are you going to live with his father?"

"Not me. George's dad is a bad lot; everybody knows that. He writes letters saying that he's a poor widow with eight children—all under four, and down with the measles"—she laughed.

"George used to go for the answers, and when there was no answers he got a welting. He won't go no more, and the old man's got to send somebody else. Some day, George says, he'll be caught. Oh! he's a crafty one."

"Too crafty for his own interest."

"George ought to be a gentleman if he had his rights. But I don't care. If he was a gentleman he wouldn't marry me. His name isn't George properly; it's only the boys call him George."

"What does his father call him?"

"He used to call him 'you little devil ;' but he doesn't any more. Calls him George, same as the boys do. His real name is Gerald."

"That's my name."

"It's a swell's name. George doesn't care to be called that ; I've always called him George."

"She is loyal to her lover," said Helen, laying her hand on the girl's hair. "They all are ; terribly loyal and obedient."

"George," the girl continued, "was always better than the other boys. They used to go on the barges at low tide ; he wouldn't."

"What did they do on the barges ?"

"Well, when it's low tide, the barges sometimes lie out on the mud. Then the men go ashore, and the boys watch their chance and get aboard. Sometimes it's coals, sometimes it's sugar in bags. When it's coals they carry it ashore in their hats and their handkerchiefs. When it's sugar they rip open the bags with their knives, and fill their hats and their pockets and their handkerchiefs and their boots. A ha'penny a pound they can get for the sugar."

"Oh ! and George wouldn't join them ?"

"No. He wouldn't never go stealing. Said his dad might go if he liked, but he wouldn't. Nor he wouldn't play darbs—cards, that is—for a penny turn-up like the rest."

"I see. George wouldn't gamble, then ?"

"No. His father, you see, lost all his money that way, playing darbs with the swells on Sunday afternoon when the coppers weren't about. 'Not good enough for me,' George said. So he wouldn't."

"Does he drink?" asked Gerald, getting closer to the "intimate life" of the interesting George.

She considered a little. "Not much," she said. "Now and then. That don't hurt. They made me drunk the other night, standing treats, you know. I don't want to drink, and no more don't George. If he won't, I won't."

"If he will, you mustn't, Glory," said Helen.

She shook her head. "When they come home mad drunk and take the strap to their wives, besides kicking and knocking about awful, it's best to be drunk as well. Then we don't mind it till the morning. You should see some of the women."

"My dear, I do see them," said Helen. "And that is why I want you never to drink, whatever George does."

"Has George been to school?" asked Gerald.

"He was in the Sixth Standard before he was twelve. There wasn't a sharper boy in the whole school. He borrows books at the club, and takes them home. He says that when his father isn't drinking—he won't drink at the public-house,

but only by himself—he talks about books like a teacher.”

“With all these advantages he might do something better than the docks.”

“Well—he’s like the rest of the boys. They never teach ’em nothing. All George can do is to be a coalie or a cornie, and to use his fists.”

“How does he get on with his father?”

“He don’t mind about his dad ; nobody minds. You see it’s this way. There’s a lot like the boys that got lagged yesterday. They hang about the public-house ; they talk about getting a job. They don’t want jobs : they only want drink. If they can pick up anything they will, whether it’s an orange off a barrer, or a pair of shoes outside a shop. They’re not the sort likely to mind much whether an old man is on the square or not.”

“I suppose not. It seems a pity”—he turned to Helen—“that this young fellow can do nothing better than dock work.”

“If he cannot get regular work, he will certainly turn prize-fighter. It doesn’t sound quite a desirable profession. But after all——”

“George,” said Glory, communicative on the subject of her lover, “will always put on the gloves. He’s beaten everyone except Mister Jem. When he can beat him he says he shall be able to challenge the Shadwell butcher. There’s big money in it.”

"You will have a feast on Sunday, won't you, Glory? You couldn't be married without a feast, could you?"

"Not likely," said Glory, thinking of the essentials.

"The wedding feast will begin after the religious ceremony," Helen explained.

"Glory has her wedding frock and hat—and the feast will last from Sunday morning till Monday morning, if the drink lasts out."

"There's a barrel of beer, and I don't know how many bottles of whiskey and gin," said Glory.

"You will take care, Glory," said Helen. "Better let the rest do all the drinking."

"Will George's father grace the festival?" asked Gerald. "I mean, will he be there?"

"He isn't asked. George won't have him. I say, Miss Helen," the girl laughed, "it's funny—George will have to be married in his own name. Nobody but me knows his name."

"What is it?"

"It's Gerald Tablett—Gerald Tablett."

"What?"—Gerald changed colour suddenly—"what did you say?"

"Gerald Tablett—Gerald Tablett—it is his father's name, and it was his grandfather's name. George is a gentleman if he had his rights."

"Gerald Tablett!" Gerald repeated with a face of amazement.

"'Tablett!'" Helen repeated, wondering.

"They were gentlemen, his father and his grandfather. And a money-lender took all their money off the pair of them. They must ha' been Jugginses—musn't they? That's why George is a docker. And that's why George's father writes the letters. Being a gentleman, you see, he knows how to ask for money."

Gerald rose abruptly. "Thank you," he said to Helen, his face visibly hardening. "It's a curious case. Interesting, I daresay."

He turned away abruptly, and walked swiftly out of the room.

Helen looked after him with wondering eyes. Why was he suddenly moved? Was it by the name of Tablett, or by the disclosure of his own Christian name? And why did his face become once more like an iron mask for coldness and hardness? The man was incomprehensible with his strange and sudden moods. She sighed, because it seemed as if the impression made by the events of the morning and their long and confidential talk had been suddenly and ruthlessly effaced. What was the matter with the man, that he should be betrayed into this sudden change; this storm of emotion; this troubling of the eyes?

But Glory went on prattling.

CHAPTER XIII.

RESPONSIBILITIES.

GERALD flung himself out of the room without the least apology or excuse—without even attempting to conceal the agitation and confusion of his mind. He rushed into his own room and shut the door and locked it, as if to keep out a pursuing Fate. It was the last blow—the most unexpected—a blow delivered from a hand that looked so innocent.

“Retribution ! Retribution !” Helen’s words rang in his brain ! “There is no escape—no escape—what your father sowed you shall reap.”

“We know how, at times of great tension and trouble, at times of great anxiety, voices are heard in the brain itself—sometimes voices that speak of things having no connection with the present juncture ; sometimes voices that talk over the actual situation. “Now,” said the voice, “you have been enriched with a family connection more honourable, more desirable even, than Mr. Burkle or Mr. Nobes. On your father’s side you have paupers and undertakers, and a reputation that ought to satisfy any son ; on your mother’s side you have a begging letter-writer : a rogue irreclaimable : a fraud hopeless of reform :

an Impenitent of the first order. On the same side you have a young dock labourer, who aspires to be a bruiser, and is the pal of Hooligans ; with him you have a young lady connected with a jam factory who gets drunk on small provocation. What more can you desire ? ”

“ It is part of your heritage,” continued this agreeable voice. “ You must pay for your great fortune. If the whole world does not know these pleasing truths, it is because you conceal them and pretend to be a gentleman. You a gentleman ? You a man of honour ? You—who go about with these secrets locked up ? You ? Why your money is the heart’s blood of multitudes : it reeks of ruin and despair. Go into the streets around you. Tell the people that you are the son of Isaac Moorsom, who ruined them all far and near : from every window will be hurled curses upon your name. You ? Why, you are a living lie.”

These accusations were bitter, but they were true. Fate pursued this unhappy man with a scourge, not of scorpions, but of disreputable cousins.

It must be owned that the situation, difficult at the outset when there seemed no danger of discovery, was now become intolerable on account of these additional details.

He made another effort to stiffen himself under

the burden of these facts. The fardel borne by Christian upon his back was light in comparison with that laid upon these unwilling shoulders. He could only endure it by remembering that the story was known to himself alone, and could be discovered by no one.

This was Wednesday. Could he run away at once, and so have done with the business? But he had promised to stay for a week—three days more. He might go home : he might go abroad : he might stay abroad ; wherever he went, however, he would be haunted by the same memories, he would be living the same life of pretence and pretension.

And then—a curious symptom—he felt himself attracted towards these new relations—even towards the Impenitent. He was interested in them. As for the young champion, he would like to do something for him ; Jem could advise, perhaps ; and as regards Mr. Burkle, he could not suffer the man to fall again into absolute destitution. He must find out something for him. Nobody would guess why he helped either the Slogger or the decorator. Nobody would suspect ; nobody would ever know.

And then he sat down on the bed and groaned, for the prospect of this pretence always with him during his whole life showed itself in its shameful horror. How long would it last? All his life.

Would there be any more shameful discoveries, any more things to be hidden away? "More"—this was the voice within that answered—"much more." He might be found out and exposed—much more might happen.

Of course he over-estimated the importance of the secret. Every man who possesses a skeleton does over-estimate its importance. Perhaps it would be best, after all, to invite the world to open the cupboard for itself and to see that skeleton. There might be a little awkwardness at the outset—on the other hand, there might be none; after which the world might go on as before, quite unmindful of the skeleton, which for all the good it is, considered as a bogey, might just as well be decently buried or reverently cremated.

He stood up, he looked out of the window; he put on his hat and wandered irresolutely into the streets; he could not sit still—he must move, he must walk.

He went out into the streets—the mean streets which now seemed his own. Then he felt himself drawn as by ropes to visit his new relations, and especially this new and interesting uncle—this professor of begging letters—this practitioner in an obscure branch of literature. He said to himself very resolutely, "He is my uncle Gerald, son of my grandfather, the stately and dignified General Tablett, who was himself also a prodigal

and a gambler and a profligate, but after the high aristocratic manner." The earth did not open, nor did it quake ; and from the autumn sky came no burst of thunder. Yet he passed these words through his mind slowly, and with the utmost deliberation. Nature took no kind of notice.

He found the house again : he knocked at the door ; he went in. He discovered the worthy tenant of the ground floor sitting before a pile of letters which he was opening with the utmost interest and rapidity.

" Mr. Moorsom ? " he turned and smiled courteously. " I am always glad to see Mr. Moorsom—you said your name was Moorsom, did you not ? Just now you arrive at a happy moment. Fortune once more smiles."

" Is it some new villainy ? "

" Always—always. In my line we must continually invent novelties. I am a kind of showman ; I attract the people by some new and moving story ; the shops have to follow a like method. So do the penny merchants of Broad Street. I was a penny merchant myself, once, but the kerb is cold, and the competition too much, and the position, for a gentleman, was intolerable. Besides, the returns were deplorable."

" I don't want to know what you have done."

" Then why did you look in ? For my own part, I have always found the keenest curiosity

at the Settlement about my doings. I believe that some of them have been mean enough to write to the C.O.S. about me. You know the C.O.S.? It exists to catch me—me—flattering, isn't it? To catch me. I am always finding out their little traps. Yes; if I were not what I am I should subscribe to the C.O.S."

"I don't know why I looked in."

"Curiosity, Mr. Moorsom—that is your name, I believe—an uncommon name. Well, now; this pile of letters is the result of a letter pitched perhaps in a more romantic key than you would yourself approve."

"A begging letter full of lies?"

"Of romance. I assumed the character of a widow—the widow of an officer in the army. I have been the victim of many misfortunes; the future of my children, especially of my delicate daughter, is a source of the most poignant anxiety——"

"That will do."

"So long as you know the leading features of the case. You pretended not to believe that I was once a gentleman. Pray consider if anyone but a gentleman, and an old officer as well, could write such a letter as this." He offered a copy.

"Keep your lying letter."

"This pile is the answer. I always allow the answers to accumulate for a few days because the

C.O.S. people are generally on the spot looking about for the person who calls for those letters. Here, for instance, is a letter"—he picked one out of the heap—"which I take to be a trap set by the C.O.S. The rest are postal orders—chiefly, I regret to say, for small sums ; but they mount up—they mount up. There is one thing. now—if I could only get it—" he glanced sharply at his visitor, "would set me up for life. I mean a respectable reference—a cousin, or something, who would allow me to refer to him." Gerald's face showed no sign of sympathy. "Well," he sighed, "I have, perhaps, tired them all out."

"If you succeed so well, how is it you live in this hovel?"

"Because I want money for my pleasures?"

"Your pleasure, man? Yours? In these rags? In this pigsty? Your pleasures?"

"Mine. Man alive! you know nothing. I remember that I once stayed a few days at a doss house—a sixpenny house—frequented mostly by gentlemen gone under. Sometimes outsiders got in; but mostly they were gentlemen. One man astonished me. He always had money, yet he came to a sixpenny doss. I watched him. One night he got his dress clothes out of pawn, put them on, and went off to one of the old places where they play. He played a bit, lost a bit, and

sat looking on. I may do the same thing. Perhaps I may preserve the old tastes. And this money," he laid his hand upon the letters, "may restore to me, for a few days—I have always had the most shocking bad luck—some of my old pleasures. When the money is gone—then the pigsty and the trough again."

"Do you like this kind of life?"

The man turned upon him. "What?" he asked fiercely; "say that again."

"Do you like this kind of life?"

The man looked round the room—the squalid, dirty, ill-furnished room. "Do I like it?" he repeated—"Great Heavens! do I like it?"

"It seems a great pity—a man of your abilities—once in a good position—with the education of a gentleman——"

"If you are going to preach about retrieving a lost character you may as well go away at once. Jem Crozier doesn't do that; he knows better."

"I was not proposing to preach at all. I was going to suggest that, perhaps, among your old friends—your relations—there might be found some one who would lend a hand to put you into a better position. You say you were an officer. Are there none of your old brother officers?"

The man looked up as if astonished. Why was he astonished?

"Why—now you mention it—yes—perhaps I

might try. Should you—you, for instance, recommend me to try?"

"Is there any reason why I should take any interest in you?"

"Not the least. Oh! not the least. If I was nabbed I suppose you would not put on your wig to defend me?"

"Certainly not. I recommend nothing. Only, if there are any persons left who knew you in your former days, you might—but, of course, I don't know how far you have estranged your friends."

"Well, I'll see about it. There's no hurry, is there? With your recommendation—yours—yes, yours—I daresay I might astonish some of my relations—one, at least."

Gerald left him, and went on his way. "The man," he thought, "neither knows nor suspects anything. The former borrowing of money took place at Golden Square, not Finchley. He knows nothing of the marriage: he had been cut off from the family long before. He knows nothing."

"Now," said the Impenitent. "Does that chap know? How should he? His father wanted it all forgotten, hidden away. How should he know? This is just delicious—delicious; I shall write to him by his own advice. It's beautiful—beautiful."

Gerald went down the street. On the way an idea had occurred to him : a method of assisting his cousin Mr. Burkle, without raising the least suspicion. He would simply put him into a shop and start him once more as a master. Perhaps Mr. George Nobes, successor to I. Moorsom, would sell his business. If Burkle was once established and settled, and the Slogger was provided for according to Jem's views—he might then safely and honourably retire. Nobody would ever know the truth, unless he himself revealed it.

He found the Burkle household restored to comfort. Food newly bought was in the cupboard ; clothes recovered from the refuge of the impecunious were hanging up on pegs ; there was furniture also recovered from that refuge ; there were kitchen utensils ; the ship's decorator, his hand restored to vigor by means, perhaps, of beef, no longer dropped, but, brandished with vigor, was nailing up a blind.

"You see, sir," said Mr. Burkle, "the effect of a small loan judiciously expended. I am now, being well fed and dressed respectably and the use of my hand come back to me, once more in a position to look for a job."

"No one so sturdy and so willing as Burkle," said his wife.

"Yes. I was thinking, Mr. Burkle"—Gerald

sat down and looked about him—"I was thinking that you are, perhaps, somewhat old for looking after odd jobs. The young men get the best, naturally."

"There's nothing else left for me."

"At your age it would be much more comfortable for you if you had a small business of your own. You were once, I think, a master. You ought to have a business to superintend, not to work in personally."

"Better? Yes, yes, it would. I have often thought so, myself," said Mr. Burkle, as if such a business was a thing attainable by all. The wife turned eyes of wonder upon her visitor. What did this young gentleman mean?

"Suppose, Mr. Burkle, that some such place of business could be found for you. Suppose you could be placed in it——"

"The capital," said Mr. Burkle, recalling past experience, "I should borrow and repay by easy instalments. As for the business, there's nobody—nobody, I say—who could carry on such a business so capably as myself."

"And what kind of business would you prefer?"

"Something in the painting and decorating it must be."

"If you could only see his oaks and his walnuts!" said his wife.

Gerald rose. Once more he produced certain yellow coins from his pocket, and transferred them to the ready palm of Mrs. Burkle.

"We will consider that settled," he said. "Meanwhile, please remember that this is not an idle talk. You have friends, Mr. Burkle." With these words of mystery and encouragement he departed.

"That young man," said Burkle, "is more than ever the very image of Isaac ; take my word for it, wife. If he isn't Isaac's son—else why did he come here ? Why does he talk about a business ? He knows ; he knows. Very well. We'll say nothing ; best say nothing. All in good time. Isaac's son he is—I'm certain he is. Who but Isaac's son would bring help to Isaac's cousin—the man that Isaac sold up ?"

Gerald walked briskly away in the direction of Triangle Place, and the little burying ground, and the carpenter's shop with the family symbol or crest in the window.

"Mr. Nobes," he said to the proprietor, after a friendly greeting, "I gathered from what you told me the other day that your business is principally in one line."

"Undertaking. Funerals conducted." He pointed to the window. "That is our main line."

"Quite so. Now, should you be disposed to transfer that part of your business to another

house in the neighbourhood, and to sell the other part—the painting and the decorating part?”

“Say all that over again, young man.”

He said it all over again. “You could keep your undertaking business and sell me the rest.”

“Sell you the rest?” Mr. Nobes took time to assimilate a new idea. Besides, this was not only new, but it was surprising; it was out of the groove. He was asked if he would sell that part of his professed business which was, in fact, of no value. A very extraordinary young man! A remarkable offer!

“I am to sell,” he replied slowly, “my extensive connection in carpentering, decorating, painting, and plumbing in all its branches. This connection”—he threw out his arms—“lays all around—for miles around. G. Nobes is the favourite. Young man, are you a principal?”

“If you mean, am I myself proposing to buy this business?—yes. But I am not myself going to conduct it.”

“You propose to buy it—for another person. Well, sir, in business matters, if you understand what I mean, it’s only a question of what is offered.”

“Make me a proposal, then.”

“I must go through my books. There’s goodwill; there’s compensation; there’s stock and furniture; there’s outstanding debts. A business

like mine cannot be transferred all of a hurry. Miles around it goes. You leave it to me, and look in again. If you would like to inspect the premises, you can. Come whenever you like. A proposal you want—well—I don't say that I would refuse—but there's a deal to consider first. I should want references."

"My bank and my solicitors would do, I suppose?"

"We'll hope so." said Mr. Nobes, with affability. "If you've got a bank, you've got money. Well, then, if you are serious, come again. I will make out an estimate and a proposal."

Mr. Nobes, like all wise men, proceeded to consult his wife.

"The name of the party," he said, "is Moorsom. He defended that case in the police-court the other day. He is staying at the Settlement. Moorsom! And he's exactly like Isaac. What's he want with the business? What's he going to do with it? Well, if he makes it worth my while Old woman, it's five and thirty years since Isaac had me over this very same job—five and thirty years. I thought myself a downy one; but Isaac had me. Now it's my turn. And—old woman, if I don't have Isaac's son to rights, my name is Juggins, and not George."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HOOLIGANS.

A MAN may walk about the streets of London—any part of London—any day, even at all hours of the day, for many years, and come to no harm and meet with no molestation from pick-pocket, footpad or murderous ruffian. Formerly it was necessary in certain quarters to go in small companies of two or more together ; formerly, no one went abroad without a weapon ; for choice a trusty club. Formerly if a stranger ventured into certain courts and lanes, the attention of the collegians was immediately invited to his intrusion : bits of slate flew across the street inflicting pain and loss of blood on various parts of the head and face : flower pots fell from upper windows—window-gardening has many uses—water was thrown out : voices of menace addressed the visitor from open windows or doorsteps.

The social reformer concludes that the old deeds of violence are no longer known or practised. Order, he says, has been restored to the streets : the Mohock has been civilised. The Board school ; the parish visitors ; the Sunday School ; the policeman ; and the magistrate : by their united efforts have effected a complete re-

form : the people of the slums, if they have not become all round followers of sweetness and light, have learned to keep order.

The social reformer is an optimist : he concludes too hastily : when the presence of law and the police is removed, the natural man reasserts himself. Nay, there are times when the temptation to assert himself once more causes the natural man to believe, against the facts, that the Law has neither arms nor eyes ; and can neither see, nor seize, nor strike.

There is a street—a mere end or cul de sac—near the Settlement, which is now entirely deserted. On one side stand three or four empty warehouses, famous among the boys of the place as the haunt of certain rats, reported to be as big as rabbits and as fierce as weasels : the houses have been so long empty that one is surprised to find even rats still occupying premises in which there has been nothing to eat for years. The rat, however, is a sagacious creature who knows the advantage of roomy and comfortable quarters. On the other side of the street is a row of tenements boarded up and condemned. Nothing could well be more deplorable than the aspect of these miserable cottages : the boys have found a way into them, and have torn up the staircases and even the flooring : the windows are broken, the roofs are falling in ; the poor old disreputa-

ble hovels look like a company of aged criminals, racked with diseases of their own making ; able to sin no more ; sitting in an infirmary ward in rows, mere dismal bundles of groaning, creaking joints ; capable of feeling, expecting, remembering nothing but pain ; waiting to be carried away one by one. At the end of the street is a square doorway with a narrow passage. The children come to this doorway, which is full of attractions and dangers and possibilities. For here they find an ancient "stairs," its steps worn and hollowed, leading down to the river : the place is no longer used for landing or embarking : no barges are brought here : no ships lie off the stairs : only one or two boats remain, and these are never taken by anybody : at high tide the children play in the boats and on the steps ; at low tide they play in the grey mud and sand of the foreshore, where they pick up things—coals for instance, and occasionally, more valuable jetsam : they have traditions about treasure sometimes found here. Once, they whisper, a boy picked up a gold watch and chain : once a dead body was washed ashore and the boys found a purse full of money in his pocket. In the summer they can bathe in the grimy water. It is not wonderful, therefore, that the place is a favourite spot for the boys.

One morning—it happened to be that morning

when Gerald paid that visit to his newly discovered relations—a little company of half-a-dozen lads was gathered together at the corner, the N.W. corner of this street. They were lads past the school age : they were from sixteen to eighteen or twenty years of age ; they were the lads whom one sees waiting about for odd jobs, losing whatever capacity for steady work that they may have possessed at first, and inevitably learning to desire but one thing of all that the whole round world has to offer humanity—its drink : they were lads of the class which Jem Crozier tries to get into his boys' club—but they were also, unfortunately, lads who as yet held aloof from that civilising association. In plain terms, they were young ruffians of the most dangerous kind ; ready for any villainy, provided the policemen did not see them ; and restrained by no kind of scruple, no respect for law : no love of order : and no sense of pity for weakness, for age, for infirmities or for women.

They were gathered together conversing eagerly in whispers. They might have spoken out loud for there was no one to hear or to see them. The children who in holiday time would have been running up and down the river stairs were all at school : the street leading to the stairs was completely deserted : that which crossed it on the north was nearly as quiet.

Presently there came along this cross street, walking slowly, his eyes looking straight before him, and seeing nothing, the young fellow called Childe Robert.

One of the gang gave a sign ; the rest crouched against the wall ; they were waiting for this man—this man who had given evidence against their pals ; and they were going to take revenge.

As Robbie passed the corner of the street the lads rushed out and seized him. They said nothing : they simply seized him : and they carried him off between them ; moving with the swift and stealthy footstep which is the sure and certain mark of the London slum loafer, whose footstep resembles his ways, being silent, secret, and tortuous.

They said nothing : they carried him—unresisting along—three on each side ; to the doorway at the end of the street and so through the passage to the river stairs. They were going to have their revenge : there is no more quiet and comfortable spot for a gentleman to take his revenge enjoyably than the foreshore of the Thames at low tide below the Pool, particularly if one can find a convenient barge which may conceal operations of a violent character from the passing steamer.

Two or three minutes after this seizure, Gerald came along the same cross street. He was struck

with the picturesque appearance of the condemned street and turned down, looking at the gaunt and empty warehouses with their broken windows on one side and the falling tenements on the other.

At the end, he came upon the passage and observed to his surprise quite a charming view—a moving panorama of the river framed, so to speak, by the walls of the passage.

He walked down the narrow passage : he stood upon the stairs and looked out upon the river : with the sense of freedom and relief which falls upon the mind after walking through long lines of confined and narrow streets with the crowded humanity in every house.

The tide was out : the lower stones were green with some river weed : a narrow pier of flat stones ran out for a short distance across the foreshore : two boats lay in the mud below the stairs : three or four barges lay on their sides in the mud. Before him passed the procession, which never ceases all day long and all the year round, of ships and loaded lighters and noisy tugs and passenger boats and packet steamers : not of the great ocean steamers, for these go in and out of the docks below.

Gerald stood at the head of the steps. He was not aware that behind him stood, watching him the young fellow whom he had defended the

day before. George, the Slogger, no work offering for the day, was hanging about the streets in aimless fashion when he saw his defender and rescuer turning into the passage that led to the stairs. Now George knew by old experience that the stairs at low tide, when there is so much that may be picked up and so fine a field for a fight, or for a little gamble, is a favourite haunt of the 'boys' who are out of work. George also knew, because he had been told, that the boys were much disgusted that the toff who bearded beak and coppers together, and carried off his man free and acquitted, had not at the same time, stood up with the same courage for the rest of them, so that the whole lot would have been got off in the same manner and with equal ease. And he knew, further, that if they got a chance they would probably let the toff understand clearly their own views on the subject. Therefore George followed. He did not give warning, first, because articulate speech with such as George does not always wait upon thought: secondly, because he did not know for certain that the boys were there: and thirdly because it was against his instincts to prevent a fight by personal interference too early in the proceedings. Therefore he stood at the entrance, and waited for the event, while Gerald stood at the head of the stairs, and looked about him.

There is always a noise on what used to be called the silent highway. At this moment two tugs were lugging up-stream their following of barges with a mighty grunting and puffing. One could feel the tightening of the rope. Gerald looked after them as they passed by. When they had gone he became aware of another kind of noise : the voices of some who swore and some who encouraged others : and some who trampled on the stones and shingle and in the mud of the shore. And looking round he cried out something strong and loud, and leaped down the stairs.

For down below between a barge and the piles of an old wharf half-a-dozen of the boys had got something—somebody—down and were jumping upon him and kicking him about the head and using language which made up in earnestness what it lacked in variety.

Gerald was not an athlete, like his friend Jem Crozier : but he was young, tolerably strong, active, and by no means without courage. He leaped down the steps and charged the cowardly assailants with a light stick which broke at the first blow upon the shoulders of a young fellow making a football of his fallen enemy's head.

"Cowardly brutes !" he cried, driving out with his fists right and left. The boys fell back ; they fell back right and left : there were six of them :

then they rallied and all came on together. They sprang upon him like hungry wolves : they hung upon him : they fought with fists and hands : they tried to bite him. In a moment Gerald was down : they yelled their triumph : they rushed to follow up the victory by kicking at his legs and head—but their triumph was short. For into the midst of them sprang none other than George the Slogger : no one along the riverside was better known or more respected. George, like another Hector, bestrode the prostrate form of his advocate : he let fly with his long arms : he wasted no breath in shouts : he acted in impressive silence : he laid them low one after the other : he gave them no time to rally : they fled : they fled along the foreshore, down the river.

George picked up his friend. "Just as well," he said, "that I come along in time. I ought to ha' told you. Have they hurt you much?"

"Not at all, I believe—except a few bruises. But who is the fellow they were kicking about?"

Whoever he was, he lay motionless. The soft ground, half mud, half grey stones was trampled into holes which were filled with water : the body lay partly in one of these holes : it was covered with mud from head to foot : His head lay on the left arm : Gerald lifted it up : it was bleeding in half-a-dozen places. Gerald wiped off the mud and blood from the forehead and the

mouth. Heavens ! It was the fellow they called Robbie—or Childe Robert ; the Guild member : the acolyte : the wearer of the cassock : the young man with the saintlike face and the limpid eyes. Alas ! The eyes were closed and the face was lined with red rivulets or black with the riverside mud.

"The boy they call Robbie," said Gerald. "The boy who says he had a call ! They've murdered him !"

George looked on the prostrate figure more carelessly. "I dun know," he said. "I've seen 'em like this when the boys have been at 'em, just as bad—but they came round. It's the kicking, you see. First they has him down, and then they jump upon him and then they kick him about the head."

"Help me to carry him. I suppose we must ake him to the Settlement."

George lifted the lad, still unconscious, by the shoulders : Gerald took the feet and so they bore him between them up the stairs.

"Do you know the boys, George ?"

"I know them fast enough."

"If this lad is killed there will be a hanging at Newgate on an extensive scale. You will have to give evidence, George."

The champion made no reply. To give evidence against his old pals : to take the side of the

Law and the Police seemed an impossibility. However, he put the thought aside.

"Did they mean to murder him?" asked Gerald.

"Well—it's like this. They meant to bash him 'cause of his evidence. I don't know how they got him down there; but they did somehow—asked him to come down and preach, p'raps. Then they knocked him over and they jumped upon him and they kicked him about the head, so he couldn't sing out—see? And there was nobody down there on'y themselves—see? And they had that barge between them and the river so's they couldn't be seen from the ships—see? And the tide is on the turn and in 'arf a hour he'd a been covered with the water. When he'd float—with the ebb—he'd go down river and p'raps never be seen no more. See? That's what they meant."

"How did they get him down there?"

"I dun'know—He was a reg'lar little fool. He'd believe anything—coaxed him—p'raps they carried him. Made him go somehow. It's a lonely place with the houses falling down and the warehouses empty. Caught him unawares p'raps and carried him down."

"All because he gave that simple evidence?"

"Well—they didn't like him before. He goes about at nights and sees things. Some of

the boys were pinched a week or two ago over a little crib they'd got for Sundays. They put it on to this chap."

"You mean that he told the police about a gambling crib?"

"Yes—they always get together somewhere on Sunday—and some of 'em got run in. O' course they didn't like that—and he won't let 'em alone. He speaks up to the boys in the street about their ways—jaws about the girls—and the drink and all. O' course they don't like that. He's a poor little chap to look at, too—not like Mister Jem. They're afraid of him. But this little chap—why anyone could knock him over. There's no credit in knocking him about. Yet he wasn't a bit afraid. That's queer now, isn't it?"

"Did no one caution him?"

"Glory told Miss Wentworth and she said she'd speak to him. But I suppose he wouldn't mind. Seems as if he wanted to get his head bashed. Reg'lar little fool, he is."

They carried him up the stairs and through the streets—a miserable object covered with the mud and the coal dust and the slime of the foreshore, save when the red blood oozed out upon his head and face and hands. His eyes were still shut: he showed no signs of consciousness at all.

It was significant of the place that no one

seemed surprised : the women looked after them but no one followed : there was no curious crowd gathering at their heels : it might have been a sack of coals that they were bearing between them.

And so they bore him to the Settlement. The place in the morning is mostly deserted. But Helen was in the Library, and the Physician who lived there was in his room.

They carried him upstairs to his own room. On the wall hung the lad's uniform—the Cassock and the biretta of his Guild. There was a faint smell of incense—the smoke which the poor boy mistook for true Religion—clinging to the long skirts of that ecclesiastical robe : there was a crucifix on the wall—the possession of which, he thought, marked the true Christian. A book with red edges and a black cross on the cover, called "Guide to Confession"—that rite which the poor boy believed to contain the very essence of the Christian Faith—stood on the mantel shelf : for furniture there was nothing but the narrow bed, a chest of drawers ; a washstand, a small table and a chair. One expected to find a hair shirt and a knotted scourge and other instruments of maceration. Perhaps they were in a drawer.

They took off his torn and muddy clothes : they washed him and laid him on the bed. He was breathing : so much was gained ; and when

the doctor lifted his hair to examine his wound, he became conscious with a shriek of pain and a shudder, and then closed his eyes again and seemed to fall into unconsciousness once more.

When the wounds were dressed he lay on his back, his eyes closed, breathing slowly and with effort.

Gerald looked at the Doctor who shook his head.

Helen, who had appointed herself nurse, bent over the patient and whispered, "Robbie! Robbie! Can you hear? Do you understand?"

"It hurts to speak," he replied. "Who was it?"

"The boys set upon you—Mr. Moorsom rescued you. Now be quiet. You are at home and in your own bed."

He obeyed for a while. Presently he murmured, "Is Mr. Moorsom here?"

"Yes—I am here."

"Is it all for ease and pleasure?" he murmured.

"What does he mean?" asked Helen, surprised; for the question raised a flush in Gerald's face.

"I insulted him the other day. He reminds me of it. Robbie, forgive me—I did not understand."

"Of course he forgives you. Now go away all of you and leave me to look after him."

"We can do nothing more for him," said the Doctor, "If there is any injury" — he touched the boy's forehead — "we shall discover presently."

Now, as he lay there, Gerald became aware of a remarkable change that had fallen upon the boy's face. With his eyes closed, with the pallor of faintness and weakness upon him, with the cloud of dull pain lying upon his forehead, he looked even more saintly than when Gerald first observed that wonderful expression which he rashly assumed to be affectation. It was the boy's life and habitual thought which was thus visibly stamped upon his face. You know a certain tomb in Westminster Abbey,—a new tomb—on which lies the marble effigy of one who lived a saintly life and now lies offering his very face as an example to those who follow after ; teaching how such a life may lend an outward and visible mark of purity and sanctity which seems to be not of this world. As is the saintly face which crowns that saintly life, so was the face of this boy—so pure, so sweet, so holy.

"Helen," Gerald whispered, "I have done him a great injustice."

"Since he forgives—oh ! Mr Moorsom—since he forgives."

"Though he forgives, I cannot forgive myself. If he should recover——"

"I think he will recover. He is young: he is stronger than he looks. Besides, his work is only just beginning. I do not think that he will be suffered to die yet. Some time or other. But not yet. He will first live long enough to become an example and an influence and a memory."

"That is your way of putting it."

"Yes," she replied simply. "And, Mr. Moor-som, what better life can a man live than to be an example and an admonition to those around him? And what better death can he die—if this boy dies to-day—than to be struck down in the midst of his work, by the very people for whom he has given his short day's work?"

In her soft and tender eyes, he read a reproach. They said in addition to those words, you, whose whole thoughts are of self: whose days are troubled with a selfish terror: whose life is fettered and bound with chains of self—look upon this bed of pain and ask which of the two is the nobler, you or he, which of the two is the more to be pitied."

That is what he read. Helen herself meant no such reproach, nor was it in her mind. That he read these words in her grave and earnest eyes is a proof that a change was already beginning in his mental attitude towards the world at large and himself especially.

CHAPTER XV.

HIS COUSINS.

“GOOD GRACIOUS !” cried Janet, “what has happened ?”

She was making another round among the tenements : she had already fought two or three battles against drink and dirt and thriftlessness : she had washed two or three children with her own hands : she had done two or three bits of house cleaning and tidying for the sake of other children : she had encountered the woman of the ground floor back who had, as usual, a “head” upon her : and she came up expecting to find this obstinate pair—the pair of Burkles—in the last stage of starvation.

“GOOD GRACIOUS !” She looked about her with amazement—for Burkle whom she had left in rags, lying on the bare bed, too weak to stand was now upright and clothed and strengthened with good food. The remains of a noble breakfast with the fragrance of bloater and more than half a loaf on the table—there was once more a table—nay : the humble apartment of the Burkles was transformed. The furniture had returned to it, including some of the solid old “sticks,” relics of the former greatness of the Master Painter :

the clothes had been rescued from captivity : the cups and saucers, the pots and pans had come back : the room now presented a well furnished and comfortable appearance, betokening prosperity and "good money." There was a blind before the window : and Mrs. Burkle sat in her own armchair, no longer rocking to and fro in the misery of starvation, but upright, needlework in her lap and once more enjoying in imagination the character of the respectable matron.

"What, in the name of goodness, has happened?" Janet repeated with amazement.

Burkle himself replied with dignity. "Nothing, Miss, that I have not expected for thirty years and more. Sooner or later, the luck would turn. I always said so. Ask my wife here if I didn't. Your rent, Miss, for four weeks is due." He handed over the amount with a little ostentation. "Count it. You will find it right, Miss, to a penny. As for this room we expect shortly to exchange it for a whole house—a house of our own. With a shop. Meantime, this must do."

"I congratulate you indeed, Mr. Burkle, on this good fortune. How did it come?"

"Now," said his wife, "it will be seen how wise Burkle was not to make himself cheap among those looking for jobs."

"The gentleman came here—He said that this

was not the place for a man like me. ‘Burkle,’ he says—says he—my wife, there heard him, ‘you ought to stand in your own shop—decorator and carpenter and cabinet maker—that is your proper place.’ ”

“What gentleman?”

“Presently, Miss, presently.” Mr. Burkle spoke with evident enjoyment of the situation and the surprise of his visitor, who, indeed, had only known him in his late deplorable condition.

Things must not be hurried. If we were only in such a hurry to get through the situation, life might consist of a thousand tableaux to every act. Think of the lover how he simply throws away his chances!

“I was surprised, Miss,” Mr. Burkle continued, “as you may believe. My wife will bear witness that I was surprised. For though I have always known my own value—nobody more so, I’m sure—it has been difficult to get other people to acknowledge it. In a poor place, like this, they are selfish. They think about nothing but themselves.”

“It is a common fault. But pray go on. I will take a chair.”

She sat down and listened.

“So I replied, as was but right, ‘Sir, you only tell me what I knew before. A master I have been—a master I ought to be.’ Then he ups and

says, giving me his hand to shake, 'And a master you shall be again, Burkle. Leave me to find you a shop and a house and fittings.' And as for me, I says, I will borrow the capital to work it with, same as I did before."

Miss Britton looked dubious. "You have had enough of borrowing, I should think : with your old experience."

"I am going to borrow it off of the young gentleman himself," Burkle explained. "I haven't told you, yet, who he is."

"Well ! who is this young gentleman who recognizes merit so long concealed ?"

"His name is Moorsom."

"Mr. Moorsom ? Our guest at the Settlement ? Mr. Moorsom ? Why——"

"Moorsom is his name, which was likewise my own mother's maiden name before she took the name of Burkle."

"Well—but Mr. Moorsom is a gentleman——"

"Of course—of course."

"What has Mr. Moorsom to do with your mother ?"

"Mr Moorsom's father was my first cousin."

"Oh !" No one can be a Rent Collector without coming across many remarkable cases illustrating the ups and downs of families now in the valley of Humiliation ; anon in the not ungrateful shade of obscurity : now in an unwelcome

glare of light : and again in the mellow sunshine of prosperity and a good harvest. But this case was unexpected. The young man was a private and personal friend of Jem Crozier's, who held tenaciously to the old fashioned prejudices concerning family : he looked and spoke as an aristocrat : he had acceded, in Janet's own hearing, to the doctrine that it takes three generations to make a gentleman—she herself, Janet, being doubtful as to the first. Three generations to make a gentleman ! And Burkle his cousin !

“I can hardly believe you, Mr. Burkle,” she said. “Pray who was this Mr. Moorsom, your cousin ?”

“If you'll step round the corner, Miss, and go straight up the street, you'll come to Triangle Place, where there's a burying ground with three grave stones and a house in it—and next to the burying ground is a shop with the name of 'G. Nobes, late I. Moorsom—that's Isaac—Carpenter, Decorator, Painter, and Undertaker. Funerals on cheap terms.' There's a model coffin in the window which I made myself, forty years ago, for my cousin Isaac—and a fine piece of work it is. Very well. That was this young gentleman's father's shop.”

“Oh ! Are you sure of what you say ?”

“I'm quite sure. Isaac took to putting out money on interest. He got on and ruined many,

me among the rest. Then he sold the business and went away and commenced business among the tofts—and that's how he got rich. Where he lived I don't know—nor when he died. That's his son, Miss, as sure as I sit here. There was no other Moorsom in the place except only Isaac. This young man is like his father but with a difference. More set up, like. Not so foxy in his eyes. If he wasn't Isaac's son why should he come here to find me out?"

"Because I sent him," said Janet. "When he came here, he knew nothing whatever about you."

"That makes it all the more certain. For it shows that the moment he set eyes on me, he says to himself—'Burkle is my cousin. There's the family likeness and the family cleverness. I must do something for Burkle.'"

"Did he tell you that he was your cousin?"

"No, he did not. Why should he spoil a generous act? He just says to himself, 'We understand each other—we do. Burkle is my cousin. He knows it, I know it—why should we talk about it? All in good time. We shall shake hands upon it?' So—if you catch my meaning, Miss, we shall go on being friendly. I shall wait his time. I shall not talk about things unless he pleases. Isaac got rich. I got poor. Perhaps he's not ashamed of a cousin who is de-

serving though down on his luck. And I shall borrow my capital off of him as I did off of his father."

"Who sold you up—"

"But the son won't. Isaac, who was greatly respected because he knew how to get money off of everybody—was hard—cruel hard, he was. But his son is soft."

"It was he who gave you money to get out your sticks?"

"He it was—and no other. 'Burkle,' he says, 'for patience, and not deserving of it, you haven't your equal. 'Take that, old woman,' he says, putting the money into the wife's hand."

"He did," said the wife, "and bless him for it!"

"Well," Janet rose—"It's like a dream. I I can hardly believe it. He came down here, among his poor relations—to find you out and to lift you up while he talks about three generations—Oh! I don't understand it at all. How can a man carry on such deception?" She looked about the room again. There was evidence of gifts at least. But that Mr. Moorsom, who looked like a belted Earl———"Pray," she asked, "when, do you think, Mr. Burkle, you will get this fine shop of yours? Take care it does not prove a dream."

"No dream," said the wife. "If ever any

gentleman looked true and spoke true, he did. He's gone to look about for the shop."

Her husband also testified to the rocklike foundation of their hopes. "What he said was, 'Leave it to me,' he says. 'Leave it to me. I'll see to all—Burkle,' he says, 'you're a man again,' he says. 'Next time your hand drops, your shopmen shall do your work for you while you set down,' he says, 'with your pipe in the back garden and they do the work for you.'"

Janet rose, gathered up the money, put it in her bag, made the entry in her note book, shook her head, looked doubtfully at Mr Burkle and with pity at Mrs. Burkle as upon a couple carried away by the vision of some mirage in their Great Sahara of poverty, and disappeared.

CHAPTER XVI.

HIS UNCLE.

GEORGE came to the Club on the evening after his acquittal, a veritable hero by reason of his escape, not of his innocence. To be knocked down by him this evening, was a personal distinction. Not one of the lads but pressed forward eagerly for the purpose of receiving such a

distinction from the chap who had been run in, locked up, brought before the Beak, defended by a swell in a wig and gown, and actually let off. George bore these honours bravely but consciously. The recognition was not only honourable but it was deserved. The Champion of the Club took himself seriously : to a less worthy person this surprising event would not have happened. Consider the situation : look in the glass : read your own mind in such a situation ; and you will understand the pride of George's heart.

He brought a message from his father. "Tell Jem Crozier—" it was his humour as an ex-gentleman, to use this familiarity—"that I want to see him."

"Oh!" Jem replied. "He wants to see me, does he? And he is good enough to command my attendance. Well—perhaps it would be better for me to wait on him than for him to come here. What does he want me for?"

"I dunno—Nothing that's any good. He's got his paper and his pen on the table for to-morrow. And he's begun to drink. It's some-think—It's about Mr. Moorsom."

"What about Mr. Moorsom? Is he trying to get money out of Mr. Moorsom? If so, he will probably fail."

"He's going to try and he says you're going to help him."

"Oh! That is a very likely thing to happen. Well, George, I'll look in to-morrow morning."

He kept the appointment. The Impenitent one was looking his worst, so to speak. That is to say, there were times when some faint survival of a better time showed on his face : to-day there was none : his face betrayed his real nature : it showed a creature debased, sodden with drink ; without scruple ; without the least sense of shame or self-respect. This morning however he was tolerably sober, only in his swollen face showing the traces of last night's solitary booze.

"I am obliged to you, Jem Crozier," he said, slowly. "I am very much obliged to you for coming. It is some time since you saw me. Take a chair—take a chair."

"I hope you have been doing pretty badly, of late."

"You mean well, Jem, but you have prejudices. No, I have done pretty well—I made quite a little haul the other day. In the evening the luck turned against me and I lost most of it." It was by this occasional reference to the evening that the Impenitent's friends learned that this part of the day, when he had any money, was devoted to some cheap gambling place. "However," he went on, "that kind of thing is all over. You will be glad to hear, Jem, that the luck has turned. The begging letter will soon be forgotten. I am about to return to Society."

“Alas for society.”

“I expected you to say as much. Fortune turns her wheel, as Tennyson says. We are in the slums to-day : we are in Pall Mall to-morrow. You shall dine with me at my club.”

“Shall I? Really? And walk arm-in-arm with you down Piccadilly, I suppose.”

“I was advised by our young friend, our mutual or common friend, Mr. Gerald Moorsom, to consult you. I have made many acquaintances at the Settlement, including the little spitfire who collects the rents, and the sweet little cherub who prays, and the Lady Warden who stands before one and gazes until she can find something to say ; and the very pretty girl who listens to my stories and weeps. The Settlement has been a great boon, in many ways, to this district, and especially to me. It has enabled me to converse once more with persons of birth and breeding ; a privilege, Jem, which I value at its proper price, as one who belongs to that circle. Above all it has brought Gerald Moorsom, my friend—my friend, I say—to call upon me.”

“Your friend? Come, now.”

“My friend. My more than friend. He was here yesterday. He said, ‘Have you no relations, among all the people of your early days, who would help you at this present time of trouble?’ I replied that most of them had long

since refused to have anything to do with me. It is a way with relations. I've been a relation myself. No one knows, who hasn't tried it, the pleasure of casting off, once for all, a relation, say, a cousin or even a brother. The pretence of superior virtue : the show of indignation : the relief of thinking that for the sake of virtue there will be no more advances for that fellow—you don't know the pride and the pleasure of it. I do. My own family was brimfull of scandals. Before I was cast off myself, I assisted in casting off other cases, almost as deplorable as my own."

"Look here. I've told you many times that I don't believe your stories against yourself. If you are so bad as you pretend, then you are incapable as well as villainous. But stick to the point : you drink so much that you cannot restrain your tongue—you grow tedious."

"Blaze away, Jem !"

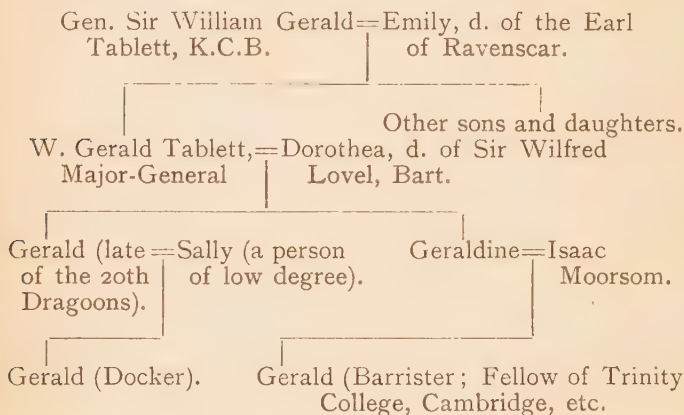
"Mr. Moorsom suggested that you should consult with me as to the possibility of getting some of your relations to do something for you. Is that what you mean ?"

"Precisely. It is a pleasure for me to recall the past ; but only so long as it pleases you. If you refuse to be pleased, or to believe what I say, most of the pleasure vanishes."

"If I am to advise, would it not be well for me to know what relations you have, and which

of them would be likely to do anything for you?"

"I've put down, here, a little genealogy of the family." He produced a paper very neatly drawn up, as follows—



Jem Crozier began the study of this paper with amazement. "Tablett?" he asked. "Why—I know Tablett. What Tablett are these?"

"The Tablett of Somerset. We are an oldish family, Jem Crozier—Mushroom Jem, I should call you; very, very much, older than the Croziers."

"You one of the Tablett!"

"Your grandfather began as a common clerk or quill driver, I believe. Mine, at that time, was a country gentleman of long descent. He was a younger son. There were other sons and

daughters. I have not entered their names because I know nothing about them. It is a long time since I went about in their world."

"Well—there are Tablett in the Diplomatic Service and in the Church and every where—They must be your people. And Lord Ravenscar is your cousin. And you were yourself in the Dragoons. Man, you have indeed fallen—"

"A good way down, is it not? Like Lucifer, or Vulcan—which was it?—who fell for nine days and nine nights. Never mind. I am going back to society, as I said before: and you shall dine with me at my club."

"Indeed! Your marriage was with one Sally."

"Quite a low creature. Quite. Not to be mentioned at my club. Like the little animal my son is to marry. You will not allude to her when you dine with me."

"Well—you have cousins in plenty to choose from. Will you bring your case before the present Lord Ravenscar? You will have to tell the whole story."

"No, not Lord Ravenscar, nor to any of the Lovells my mother's people: they've given me the Boot long ago: nor to any of the Tablett—they are accustomed to the family disgrace and they're no longer ashamed of it. Go on with the genealogy. Finish it."

"Your sister Geraldine—married to—Isaac

Moorsom—Isaac Moorsom—her son—Gerald—Gerald? You are actually the uncle—the brother—of—of the mother of my friend, Gerald Moorsom?”

“Just so. That is the exact truth, and now you understand how I’m going to get back to society.”

“Does Gerald know this?”

“I don’t think he does. Perhaps he’s playing a game. Let me see, it must be seven and twenty years since my sister married the money-lending cad. My father sold her. But he kept the proceeds of the transaction entirely to himself; I got nothing. He was always a miracle of selfishness, my old dad.”

“What on earth do you mean?”

“I say that the old man, my father, was cleaned out. Not one single sixpence more could he raise. Moorsom—he wasn’t called Moorsom then—but Rosenberg of Golden Square—”

“You mean—you mean—Rosenberg the famous money-lender? Moorsom? Man, I believe you are the greatest liar in the whole world.”

“Believe what you like. Moorsom—or Rosenberg—it’s the same thing—made an arrangement with the old man. He gave him an annuity of £500 on condition of marrying my sister. She was not to know his profession: he would marry

in his own name : he would give her a fine house and every thing. Very well—Very well : it was not only ruin in front of him but it was starvation. The old man had nothing left—not even his family. No one would help him any more than they would help me. I was already out of the army. I sent in my papers, being disgusted with the service. I was living on my wits, and wasn't going to keep the old man as well. So my sister agreed."

"Poor thing ! Did she never find out ?"

"Her husband never told her—nor did her father. I believe she found out through some letters I had to write to her."

"Oh ! you are indeed a——"

"I am—I am. Now do you believe my story ?"

"Can Gerald know ? He has always told me——Oh ! It is quite impossible that he should know."

"I don't care whether he knows or whether he does not. The fact is that his father was the most notorious money lender at the West End. My nephew's money was made by the cent. per cent. business—every farthing of it."

"Gerald *cannot* know," Jem repeated. "He cannot. It is impossible."

He threw the paper on the table, and sprang to his feet. "If this is another batch of lies," he began, with heat,

"Don't excite yourself, Jem. It's Gospel truth. Gerald advised me to consult you about applying to a relation for assistance. To whom should I apply but to himself? First because no one else will listen to my pathetic story of sufferings undeserved—and next because he himself advised this course and it will please him so much—so very much—especially if he really doesn't know—to find that I have taken his advice."

"What have I got to do with it?"

"You are the friend of both parties, especially of me. Go to your friend Gerald Moorsom, and tell him that you come from his poor uncle, his mother's only brother, who is down on his luck and is living in this den. I don't know how much he is worth—and I don't ask for shares to keep me quiet. I am not exorbitant. I want only comforts. The least he can do, however for his mother's sake, is to treat me as his father treated mine. Let him give me £500 a year and he shall have no further trouble with me."

"He will have no further trouble with you." Jem repeated the words mechanically, because the thing seemed like a horrid dream.

"That is the figure that I would put it at. It may be worth more to keep a disreputable relation quiet—but I am not greedy. What satisfied my father shall satisfy me. His habits were more extravagant than mine. I am satisfied with as much."

"Does Gerald know these things?" Jem repeated. It was so amazing, so incomprehensible, that his friend, a man of the most candid soul, should have kept the family history in the background, that he kept returning to the point.

"I say that I don't care whether he knows it or not. What difference does it make to me?"

"I am not thinking of you."

"If his father is dead——"

"He is dead."

"Then his death should have been announced in all the papers. The famous Rosenberg could not die without a send-off notice in the papers."

"I do not know that anything at all has been said about him in the papers."

"Then Isaac Moorsom, *alias* Rosenberg, died under the name of Moorsom. Nobody knew, or cared, who Moorsom was."

"Very well. Now you go away, Jem and, as a friend of both parties, give Gerald my message."

"Oh! You think I am going to deliver that message?" Jem's face darkened. "And what if I refuse to give that message? What if he refuses to give you that annuity?"

"Then, friend Jem, my course is clear. I shall prepare an account of the life and death of the famous money-lender and I shall send it to the papers. It will read very sweetly for my nephew. Eh? Listen." He took up a written

document, and began to read, "The notorious usurer, Rosenberg, whose death will be received with mingled feelings by so many of his victims, has left an only son, Mr. Gerald Moorsom, Fellow of Trinity College Cambridge, and Barrister at Law of Lincoln's Inn."

Jem interrupted him with an interjection, which may be guessed. "If I were Gerald," he said, "I should reply, "You abominable villain! I will not stir a finger to help you. Stay where you are. Starve and cheat and be—as you will. Not one penny: not one penny shall you get from me! And do your miserable worst!"

With these words Jem Crozier walked away.

"I'm disappointed," said the impenitent though gentleman rogue. "But it's only thirty years or so since Jem's grandfather was made a peer. He doesn't yet understand the feelings of a gentleman, especially of a gentleman low down—who's got no other weapons but a pen, some power of invention—and blackmail. We shall see, however, we shall see."

CHAPTER XVII.

AT THE SIGN OF THE SYMBOL.

THAT same day, Helen Wentworth met Mr. George Nobes. The worthy practitioner, who every day was to be seen walking up and down the streets on business, which in this quarter is always brisk, was well known at the lectures and entertainments of the Settlement. As a prosperous tradesman and a vestryman he stood on a higher level, so to speak, than the common run. He took a front place : he assumed the air of one who knows all about the subject of the lecture : he listened to the concert with a critical air. He had no objection to the Settlement, which, he perceived, had caused no increase in the rates, so far : on the other hand, he felt no enthusiasm for their work, which he regarded as an amateur attempt to do what the clergy and the parish officers were paid to do.

“ Yes,” he said, in answer to an observation of Helen’s. “ There is a good deal to do. It’s not a paying business—in fact we lose by it—but there ! We must help the pore ; why else do we have a Board of Guardians ? ”

“ The mortality among the children here is very high, Mr. Nobes.”

"It is, Miss. It is. Though, if they all grew up, what would they do for work?"

"If we could get them better food——"

"It always was so, and it always will be so. That's the comfort of it. Meantime, a funeral, even a cheap funeral, conducted, as I say, with dignity, is a moral lesson to the neighbours."

Helen smiled and would have passed on, but Mr. Nobes had more to say.

"You've got a new young gentleman at the Settlement, haven't you?"

"There is no new member."

"I mean a tall young gentleman, quite a young dook to look at."

"We have a guest, if you mean him. Mr. Moorsom."

"Moorsom! Moorsom! I said it was Moorsom! I told the missus that it must be Moorsom! Well, now——"

"What has Mr. Moorsom to do with you, Mr. Nobes?"

"Come this way, Miss—only into the next street. Two doors or so—and I will show you."

He led the way to Triangle Place, where, beside the little burial place with the tombs of the dead and the cottage of the living, stood the little shop.

"There, Miss!" he said, pointing to the house

front. "Read that! Successor to I. Moorsom, Established 1855."

"Well. But Mr. Moorsom is a gentleman."

"So he is, so he is. He looks it, through and through."

"What has Mr. Moorsom to do with your predecessor?"

"I bought this business of Isaac Moorsom. He bested me over the job. Now, I knew Isaac Moorsom, who was but a year or two older than me, since we were boys together. At school together. We were apprenticed together. We were friends. But there's no friendship in business. That was Isaac's motto. And it's mine. No friendship in business. Therefore, I do not grumble, though he bested me when I bought his business—ah! made me pay half as much again as I ought."

"Well, but what has this to do with Mr. Moorsom?"

"I'm coming to that as fast as I can. When Isaac was a young fellow he was a proper young fellow, tall, and what you might call, if you know what I mean, good looking. I remember him, the same as if it was yesterday."

"Quite so. Mr. Isaac Moorsom, your predecessor, who knew of no friendship in business and bested you, was, in his youth, tall and good-looking. We have got so far." Helen's time

was precious and the man's roundabout method was tedious.

"While Isaac carried on this business he was a money-lender as well, in a small way. Everybody went to him who wanted money and he lent it out on security. Sooner or later, of course, they had to pay up. Then there was a row. For Isaac was just as hard as they make 'em—couldn't make 'em harder if they was to try. He bound 'em and he ground 'em," repeating the rhyme he considered so happy and so effective "bound 'em and ground 'em. He rose the rents and sold 'em up: he put 'em into the County Court: he ruined 'em: every man. There was his own cousin—Burkle—"

"I understand, Mr. Nobes. The man was a money lender. Now let us go on."

"After a bit I suppose he saw his way to something better, so he cleared up his accounts here, got in all his money: sold his business—I bought it of him—and he went away."

"Well? where did he go?"

"I don't know."

"What became of him?"

"I don't know."

"What is the connection between him and Mr. Moorsom now staying at the Settlement?"

"I don't know, either. From the time he went away I never saw or heard anything of Isaac.

I used to look in the papers, especially if there was a money-lending case on, but I never saw the name of Moorsom mentioned."

"But the connection—where is it?"

"It's this way. The day before yesterday, in the morning, I opened my shop door and I stepped outside for a bit of fresh air. Then I see standing just where you are, Miss, a young gentleman. And I do assure you, miss, if you know what I mean—that I fairly jumped when I saw him. Because miss, before my eyes—stood the very image of Isaac Moorsom—my old friend who bested me, just as I knew him years and years ago."

"That was a strange coincidence."

"You can call it what you please. I call it a staggerer. He walked up to me as cool as bears and he says—says he—'Name of Moorsom,' he says, 'Any Moorsoms about? I'm curious about the name of Moorsom,' he says."

"Very well. And what then?"

"I told him a good lot—what I thought would interest him; how old Isaac was a skinflint and a grinder of poor men's bones—and when he'd heard all I had to say he thanked me mighty polite—and he took off his hat with a smile, as if he was pleased with what I'd told him, and he walked off. Then I called my wife. 'Come quick,' I says. I says 'Look across the road,' I

says, 'Who is that young feller walking along?' Just then he turned. 'Why' she cries out, 'if that isn't Isaac Moorsom come back to life young again and just as he used to be!' What do you think of that, Miss?"

"I really do not see that it is any business of mine."

"Now Isaac had no brothers or sisters—they all died in childhood. Nor he had no cousins except Burkle, whose mother was a Moorsom. So who can this young man be?"

"A distant relation, I suppose."

"Distant relations who are rich don't go out of their way to enquire after cousins who are not. Do they, now? Most of us, in these parts, like our cousins to keep themselves to themselves unless they mean parting—but that wouldn't be business. There's no cousins in business. Why did that young gentleman come here? Why did he ask so curiously about Isaac Moorsom? Why did he want to know if there were any cousins left? I'll tell you why—It's because he's Isaac's own son. I'm certain of it—sure of it—Isaac's own son. You ask him, Miss, before all your people—you say 'Mr. Moorsom, was your father's name Isaac—and is Mr. G. Nobes the eminent carpenter, plumber, decorator and undertaker, his successor?'"

"It is certainly strange," said Helen. "But

again, Mr. Nobes, it is not my affair. I cannot ask Mr. Moorsom why he put these questions, or why he came here, or if he is connected in any way with—but it is impossible. I can only suppose that he saw his own name over a shop and asked if there were any branches of the family still residing in this quarter. Everyone is curious about people of his own name.”

“That wouldn’t make him exactly like Isaac. No. He’s Isaac’s son. He’s Isaac’s son.”

It was no business of Helen’s. But the thing remained in her mind. She found herself applying the theory to Gerald’s case—the very curious case of a young man with a perverse twist—and the more she thought of it, the more it seemed to explain and to account for a good deal. Yet, surely it was impossible. How could a young man of Gerald’s manners, and his appearance and his general culture, be the son of a little undertaker of the slums?

CHAPTER XVIII.

RECOGNITION.

THE week—the covenanted stay of a week—the week of fate—the week of Surprise and Discov-

ery—like any ordinary week—came to an end, and, as usual, with Saturday.

Gerald's seven days at the Settlement were completed. He was free to go home again ; to his Piccadilly flat and his club ; and to the unstable Society, propped up, as he had put it, by enforced order and by the work of the people whose only end and aim in their toil is to make wealth and civilisation possible.

We talk, fondly, of turning-points in life as if there were but two or three in the long day. Why, every week, every day, every hour in a man's life may be a turning point. The decision of any moment—the most unimportant moment, to all appearance, may affect the whole of his future life—so long for him who works, so short for him who remembers.

The turning-points, for the most part, whenever they occur, are disregarded : we do not discern their importance till long after they are passed : we only remember them when we find new burdens laid upon reluctant shoulders : for most of us the days seem to pass like a winding stream, in what used to be called a champaign country, lingering among scenes which are always changing and always the same : there are the meadows beside the stream : there are the trees and the hedges, and the bushes : there are the cattle and the silly sheep : there is the Church

with the Churchyard : yet always the stream, slowly yet without pause, makes its way to the ocean. For some the scenery changes : the country breaks down in ravines and dales : the stream leaps over waterfalls through foam and spray : it is a wild mountain torrent : it turns water wheels : it lights up hanging woods : in beauty ever new, in force ever resistless, it works its impetuous course past Church and Churchyard into the silent ocean.

This week changed one man's life. He discovered the change on the last day, when he should have rejoiced at getting away from the humiliations of his new discoveries ; away from the people upon whom his father had trampled ; away from streets and houses which mocked him and accused him ; away from the terror of open shame. On this day, contrary to reasonable expectation, he made the strange discovery that his whole mind had undergone a change.

There are many ways of accounting for such a change of heart : it is not an uncommon event : everybody must remember such a change, perhaps, many, in his own secret record—that part of a man's history which cannot be told, partly because words capable of expressing the change are not granted to many, and partly because the thing is too sacred to be confessed or to be described. Hatreds are turned into sympathies :

scorn into respect : envy into admiration. The old-fashioned way was to call such a wholesome change the expulsion of the Devil—and indeed, this is a very workable, if an allegorical, theory of explanation. Another old-fashioned way will occur to my readers.

For my own part the case before us—the case of Gerald—seems simple and capable of very easy explanation. Thus. A certain young man having great possessions—a most unfortunate thing for any young man—finds himself burdened with a secret which renders his continuance among his old friends possible only at the price of an ever-watchful pretence and concealment : by an accident, or a coincidence, or through any other cause you please, the secret becomes, so to speak, enlarged : it takes unto itself and absorbs or swallows, or assimilates a whole basketful of other secrets—blood relations. These also have to be carefully concealed from the outer world ; but they involve responsibilities which the young discoverer cannot, in common humanity, lay down or avoid. More and more, as the field of discovery is enlarged, the necessity of hiding these secrets and of continuing the old pretences weigh upon him and poison every hour of the day, and lie upon his chest, a hideous night-mare, when he should be sleeping. Honour and self-respect cower and crouch in presence of this terror : he

sees men and women in shapes no longer human : every thing in his mind becomes perverted and transformed : the people upon whom his father preyed, are nothing more than the natural quarry of the cunning man : they were born to be trampled upon by the strong man : it was by Divine Law, not to be resisted, that they remained grovelling down below and left to their own ways and their inheritance of disease, drink, and readiness to take the shortest way.

To this young man, seeing everything with perverted eyes and through this trouble of a shame which was mostly imaginary, there was granted a change of scene and a diversion of thought. For a short week he lived among a company of people who actually never thought of themselves at all. Many other things were remarkable in this community : this was the most remarkable. He alone, under that roof, thought all day long upon his own troubles and brooded over his own losses. To be sure his losses were very great. Gentle birth, for instance, at which philosophers scoff as an accident of no importance, is a possession which those who have it would keep if everything else was withdrawn. He had to abandon that, or else to pretend to have it still. Respect for his father's memory was another loss : the attempt to retain this possession by defending his father's position as one

common to all men of business proved futile. Respect for the fortune which he had inherited—that was gone, too. These things and the possibilities of further discoveries kept him brooding and uneasy. Within him, as Helen said, there was war against his better nature. In such a frame of mind how could he approach the work of the Settlement with either sympathy or understanding?

By one event after another he was forced to consider the whole subject from a new standpoint. The case of the lad George whom he defended : the case of the destitute Burkle : the case of the Gentleman Rogue : the work of the Settlement itself, at first unheeded : all these things sank into his brain and found their way to his heart. And so the change was effected, as it seemed, suddenly. Yet it was no more sudden than is the growth of the plant of which we take no notice till it stands before us fully grown and ready to put forth its flowers. The change was simple because it was caused by the diversion of his thoughts from his own troubles to those of others.

He awoke at six in the morning, before sunrise, from a sleep calm and restful : he desired no more sleep : he got up and dressed : he threw open his window to let in the cold fresh air of the morning : this air comes up the river with every flowing tide : outside, the streets were perfectly

still and quiet, the folk all alike wrapped in the sleep that should restore mind as well as body. His own personal self dropped from him like a garment. He felt around him the presence of the multitude, who stood by the whole of humanity waiting the moment to arise and to begin again the customary round: the monotonous mill of work: the further degradation and debasement: the ignoble crime: the craving for drink; the evil passions and the diseases and the pains and misery and horror of the place: and among all these things to exhibit unconsciously the perennial flowers of love and charity; the kindly heart surviving the lowest impurities: the generosity which clings to the most hardened. The things which he had learned during the last week, and without conscious effort, now crowded into his mind with a rush.

He threw himself into a chair at his table: in these days men think most clearly with pen in hand. He wrote of himself. The new consciousness, the presence, of this multitude: the reality of their miseries and their sins and impotence to help themselves, reproached him. "I am worse than the worst of these," he wrote, "I have sinned against my own laws of honour.

"I am disgraced—I am no longer fit to take my place among honest men. I pretend to what I am not—I am possessed—my whole life is threat-

ened by a craven fear. I can neither see nor understand anything because I am governed by the shame of a coward. Let me cast it from me. Let me stand upright again.

"There shall be no further concealment—I will let the whole world know the whole truth. What I have lost is gone : let it go." He wrote no more : he threw away the pen : he stood again at the open window—a voice came to him. He knew it for the voice of Helen. She said what he might have expected, "You have inherited a record of shame : it remains for you to show that the Retribution may be transformed into a blessing."

The sun rose glorious, even over the squalid housetops : the morning light fell upon a face transformed. He bethought him of the Guild Brother and went to his chamber. Helen sat beside the bed. She looked up and smiled. "I knew you would come soon," she whispered. "We have had a troubled night," she said. "There has been fever with wandering at times. But I think he will pull through. I have told you why."

"Yes—you have told me why. I said that you spoke a language new to me. I——"

"But you understand it now." She interrupted him with quick perception. "Is that so?" For she saw that in his face there were new lines and

curves ; and in his eyes, heavy and troubled no longer, she discerned a new light.

"The boy was right," said Gerald without answering this question. "He said he was called. I mocked him. He said he was called from an ignoble to a noble life. I told him it was from a life of drudgery to a life of pleasantness. That was true—but not as I understood it."

"Do you understand it now, Mr. Moorsom ?" she asked again.

Once more he evaded the question.

"Before I go away this morning let me have a little talk with you, Helen." It was the first time that he had assumed the privilege of calling her by her Christian name.

"I shall be in all the morning—Gerald." She gave him not only his Christian name but her hand, to show that she understood all it meant. He stooped and kissed it.

After breakfast he sallied forth and called upon Mr. Burkle. "My cousin !" he said, resolutely. He found the cousin on the point of sallying forth on the pretence of finding a job ; in reality in order to show by the respectability of his appearance a return of good fortune. Perhaps he was also ready, in case of meeting an old friend, to drop hints of great things to follow, even a shop with himself as master, as in the old

days. The plenty of the last few days : the recovery of furniture and wardrobe : faith in his new patron's promises : the possession of a little money : the payment of his rent : a certain natural buoyancy and hopefulness of spirit, which had enabled him to bear the buffets of fortune so long now ; being based on a solid foundation enabled him to look ten years younger and twenty years stronger.

His wife called attention to the change. "There," she said. "Look at Burkle now. He isn't the same man. There's nobody so strong as Burkle for his years."

"Glad to hear it. Glad to hear it." Gerald sat upon the corner of the table with the familiarity of kinship. "When I came here first, Mrs Burkle," he addressed the wife, but he looked at the husband, "I was sent here by Miss Janet Britton—I believe in the hope of getting some relief for a bad case. Well, I found you both in a pretty bad way—and as proud as Lucifer. No Union for you. No parish relief for a Burkle—Eh?"

"Well, sir," said Mrs. Burkle. "He's always had his pride, being once a master."

"That is so. I then went away and I made a discovery. Believe me, my good woman, I made that discovery *after* I came here, not before."

"What discovery?" But she looked at her

husband and they both cast down their guilt-laden eyes. "What discovery, please sir?"

"Well, I discovered to my great astonishment that I had been calling upon my own cousin. Burkle, your mother was a Moorsom. Deny it if you can."

"It's quite true. She was a Moorsom."

"And she was a cousin of Isaac Moorsom, my father, who began life in the little shop in Triangle Place, Carpenter, Builder, Plumbing in all its branches, Decorator and Undertaker, Funerals conducted." He went through the list with great courage. There were to be no half measures.

Mr. Burkle made no reply. His wife after a bit, answered for him, "Burkle knew it all along."

This was a new discovery.

"Knew it? Knew it all along?" Gerald felt as if the ground were sinking from under his feet. 'I knew it all along?' How on earth, man, could you know it?"

"Burkle put two and two together," said his wife. "There's nobody so sharp as Burkle. He put two and two together; and he said you must be Isaac's son."

"'Twas this way," the man of intelligence explained with modesty, "anybody might have found it out. First you came to these parts, being a

gentleman, with no call to come here. Then your name is Moorsom. Then your face and your figure are your father's—tall and a fine figure of a man he was at your age. Then you came to see me. Why should you come to see me? So I laid these points together, one beside the other : and I argued it out."

"He did," said his wife. "Most wonderful."

Gerald held out his hand. "My cousin," he said, "your premises are not sound, but your conclusion is true. Very well. I am here to-day first, to tell you what, it seems, you knew already ; and next to tell you that I have found out what I wanted for you. Burkle, you shall be a master once more."

"A master!" the man gasped. It was five and thirty years and more since his bankruptcy : he had never once ceased to mourn for the vanished glories of his early state. "A master!" Oh! He trusted the promise. But here was fulfilment. He felt for the first time after many years that fate could not touch him. The shop was coming.

His wife threw her apron over her head and there were sounds of half-suppressed sobs.

"Come with me and you shall see."

He led the way down the remnant of the stairs. Mr. Burkle followed, marvelling, yet in confidence. There was a something in the young

man's appearance and manner in which he so little resembled his father that this confidence was natural.

The two cousins walked side by side. Mr. Burkle in this company felt that he now, once more, after many years, was resuming the character which he most loved, that of the respectable master. Once to have been a master imparts a carriage and an air that can always be resumed, even when life has been all winter; even when odd jobs have provided the only means of a casual income and a precarious tea-pot is all that is left of past Egyptian fleshpots.

"You had a shop of your own once, Burkle," this emissary of a remorseful fortune explained. "You gave me to understand the other day that you could once more, if you only had the chance, manage such a shop on your own account."

"I was born to it—I was brought up to it; I have never felt myself really at home except in a shop of my own. As for accounts—" he waved his hand—"they are like reading the largest print—that easy are they to me."

"Then, Burkle, I think I can manage for you—What do you think of that?" They emerged on Triangle Place and stood opposite the establishment of George Nobes. "You know this shop—'successor to Isaac Moorsom'—you remember the place?"

"I remember it. I was once behind the counter. Why I was 'prenticed here. As for Decorating Isaac knew nothing, no more than Nobes does. But in the Undertaking Isaac had no equal, particularly in the way he led the job, and flourished the plumes. A fine man he was, and tall, and looked as if he couldn't look anything but mournful."

"Well, I have invited Mr. Nobes to meet us—and here he is." They crossed the road. "Mr. Nobes," said Gerald, "this is Mr. Burkle, whom you know."

"A credit to the parish, and a saving to the rates," said Mr. Nobes, with the appreciation and gratitude of a ratepayer. "Is this your friend, Mr. Moorsom? If so, it's like going back to old times for both of us."

"I received your estimate and your offer last night—I have sent it to my solicitors with instructions to close if the offer is reasonable—"

"Reasonable? Why it's dirt-cheap. I'm giving it—giving it—away."

"Very well—to settle the business as quickly as possible. As for myself I am the son of the late Isaac Moorsom your predecessor—and therefore—"

"I said so!" The man slapped his leg. "I said so! I knew it all along!"

"You knew it? You?" There was no firm

ground left for his feet at all. Why, the resolution that there should be no concealment was apparently useless because everybody knew every thing already. "Pray, how the devil did you know it?"

"First, your face is your father's face when he was your age—And you're tall like him—And your name is Moorsom—and you come to your father's old shop and ask after your father's cousins—and there never was more than one Isaac Moorsom. That's how I made it out."

"Yesterday and to-day are different," Gerald replied, without any apparent connection. "To-day it matters nothing. Yesterday it would have been another blow. Well—you knew—Very well—so did Burkle—I thought that no one could know—However, I am buying this place for my cousin Burkle."

"Yes!" Mr. George Nobes looked doubtful. "Burkle," he said "you were a painter and decorator by trade. But in undertaking you'll be lost—lost, man."

"I have already proposed that you should keep this special branch of your business in your own hands. You can take with you, Mr. Nobes, the symbol of the Mystery"—he pointed to the model—"with the pictures of the mutes with plumes and scarves—Now, Burkle, you might like to stay and talk matters over with Mr. Nobes."

He left them. Mr. Burkle, sanguine of success, eager to begin, confident in his own immense abilities, and perfectly certain to fail again as he had failed before, but for the protecting hand which was henceforth to sustain him : the other man, colder and keener-sighted, who had just done the best stroke of business that had yet become possible for him, and was now paying back Isaac's own heir in Isaac's own manner. One foresees for Mr. Burkle an old age dignified by his position as a Master ; not worried by a great flow of business ; a church-warden, or at least, a sidesman ; an authority in his Lodge of Foresters or Ancient Buffaloes ; and laudably ready to forget the days of the tea-pot and the tene-ment.

This piece of work off his mind, Gerald repaired next to the lodging of the Impenitent.

The man looked up with an impudent and knowing leer.

" I thought we should meet again before long. Seen Jem lately ? I had a little talk with him yesterday."

" Yes—what kind of talk ?"

" Why, you advised me to apply for help to some of my relations. So I sent for him and told him that there was only one relation of mine who would be likely to help me. And as between men of honour I told him that you were

that relation." Gerald started and changed colour. But only for a moment. It was another case in which he had thought himself incognito.

"You are that relation," the man repeated the words, "being my sister's son and my nephew."

"Oh! you told Mr. Crozier this, did you? Pray how did you know?"

"Do you think anybody could forget your father's face? You've got it exactly, and you've got his name. And why did you come here except to spy out for yourself what I was doing—the disgrace to the family—the submerged? You thought I had no eyes and no remembrance, I suppose."

"I did not know these things when I came here last Monday. I have learned them since. I came this morning only to inform you of what—it seems—you knew already."

"Very good, very good. You came to acknowledge that you have an uncle lately holding Her Majesty's commission in the cavalry. So far—that is behaving as a gentleman should. Let me tell you, nephew, that in the cavalry we know how a gentleman should behave."

"I am come to tell you that I do not intend to give you anything. Do you hear? I shall give you nothing, except, perhaps, your final conveyance to the Infirmary. Understand clearly, nothing." He spoke without the least appearance of

temper, soberly and firmly, and the man looking up saw a resolution in his nephew's eyes which reminded him of certain interviews in Golden Square.

"You must give me money. You're bound to put me on my legs again. You shall take me out of this hole—" he grasped the arms of his chair and spoke with a kind of gasp in his voice.

"You are a hardened and impenitent rogue : you glory in your villainy : you disgraced your family and yourself in early life. Nothing can ever restore you. I shall give you nothing."

"You won't—won't you? You will give me nothing?" The man glared : he gasped again : he looked round his miserable room. He had been consoling himself with the certainty of making his nephew give him money. Now, he realized that there would be nothing to expect. We need not call upon the imagination to supply the gap in the history which here occurs. It is the report of what the man said. It is a gap which is better not filled up. "Now then, I'll make you a fair offer, and I'll give you a quarter of an hour to think it over. If after that you haven't accepted, you will take the consequences." He spoke boldly but his heart sank.

"I refuse to consider any proposal at all from you."

"Wait a bit—wait a bit. Your father gave

my father £500 a year for the rest of his life on one condition, that nothing was to be told my sister about the Golden Square business. Now, then, Mr. Gerald Moorsom, I will make the same conditions with you, on the same terms. Give me £500 a year for life and I will go and live in some quiet place where certain things are not likely to come out and I will say nothing about your origin, or your father, or the way the money was made. That is my offer."

"I have told you that I will consider no proposal."

"There is my son, you may do what you like about him. He is, I am sorry to say, a young man of low tastes and menial occupation. His mother was of obscure origin—she was a girl just like the creature that he is himself going to marry. Perhaps he is best left alone. I cannot, on returning to the society in which I was born, allow myself to be disgraced by a son like that. Besides, he would not be happy."

"Unless I am mistaken, the disgrace is the other way round. However, the one thing that I want you to understand is that I shall give you nothing—nothing—nothing."

"Then—" This part of the speech also remains a *lacuna* "I will acquaint the whole world with the truth—I will sit on your doorstep and tell your friends: I will stick it on a sandwich

and march up and down Piccadilly : I will send post-cards to everybody you know : I will call for you at your club : I will go in rags and tell the Hall Porter to take my name to my nephew : I will write begging letters telling how I am left starving by a rich ungrateful nephew, son of the old money-lender : I will get lagged and tell the magistrate the whole truth so that it will get into the papers—" He stopped breathless. "Worse than that ; I will write an account of the life and death of the celebrated usurer, Mr. Rosenberg of Golden Square, known afterwards as Moorsom. I will find out the amount for which the will was proved. I will tell the world that the old man left one son, Mr. Gerald Moorsom, who is a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and a Barrister-at-Law, and calls himself a gentleman. And that little document I shall send to all the papers."

"As you will. As you will. Even then I shall give you nothing." He looked down upon the crippled creature with a new sense of pity. "Is there anywhere," he asked, "any man, once a gentleman who has fallen so low and is so hardened and so impenitent as yourself ? If you only knew, if you could only feel for a single moment the awful depths—" He thought of the theory of Swedenborg, that we shall all choose our own place after we are dead—and he thought of the

depths at which this soul would find fit companionship. "It is no use talking : I shall give you nothing. You will do what you please."

CHAPTER XIX.

CONFESSION AND CONFESSOR.

"It is very good of you, Helen," said Gerald, "to hear my confession. What seems so important to me, however, may seem quite trivial to you. Indeed, as soon as I began to think how the thing might appear to you, I perceived that it is really of no importance at all to any other person."

The matter affected his own family history. Now, nobody in the wide world cares a fig for any other person's family history. Considering the importance which everyone attaches to his own history, the general apathy about other people's history is truly remarkable. "My people," says one, "have been gentle folk for centuries." Really ! But it does not concern the rest of us. This young man, who had discovered certain unpleasant truths about his family, began to understand the indifference common to humanity, only when he proposed to narrate his melancholy history.

Helen was sitting in her own room, the Warden's room where she conducted the business of the Settlement. She left the table and took a low chair. "If the subject is not trivial to you, Gerald," she said, "it will certainly not be trivial to me." She spoke quite simply, as an elder sister might speak, out of the interest she had taken in this strange case from the beginning. "I have known," she said, "ever since you came here, that your mind was filled with some trouble."

With many hesitations; with several false starts; in a most undramatic manner, Gerald proceeded to tell his story. As he went on with it, he realised for the first time, the folly of his own action in seeking to hide away the history of his fortune and its making. He was conscious that he could not ask for sympathy and could not offer excuses. There was one thing which ought to have been done from the beginning: he ought to have told his private friends the whole story as soon as he learned it. He would then have been spared four months of trouble and anxiety and shame. He told the story, therefore, without any excuses, but with flaming cheeks and stammering voice.

Helen listened, putting in a word of encouragement and of sympathy.

"I must not blame my father," Gerald concluded. "It was inevitable that a man born and

brought up in such a place, among such people, where poverty is always staring everybody in the face, should desire money above all things. The one way to escape poverty was to get the better of his neighbours. To the last, his conscience was clear : he had kept the letter of the bond."

"You must not try to judge your father. We have our own standards by which we must judge ourselves."

"I think I have told you all. It is a miserable story."

"You were placed in a most difficult position, Mr. Moorsom. No one will blame you for not seeing your way clearly at the outset. Of course no strong man—you should be a very strong man—would suffer such a thing to stand in his way."

"Yet you once spoke of Retribution."

"It is most true. Every man inherits his father's acts as well as his father's mind, or his father's face. Your inheritance is the burden of a fortune which cannot be considered obtained in a—well—a desirable manner. It depends upon yourself how you will bear this burden."

"At least there shall be no more false pretences. Yet I could not tell the story to anyone except to you. Yours is the magic that reads a man's most secret thoughts. You found me out the very first day."

"It is easy to understand another person," said

Helen, accepting the charge of magic, "when you have once succeeded in getting outside yourself. Do you remember how we walked from church to chapel last Sunday, and you saw nothing and understood nothing, being so wrapped and absorbed in yourself?"

"I saw—however, and the memory of what I saw has come back to me, with, perhaps, some understanding."

"Tell these people, Helen, for me. Above all, tell Jem Crozier. How could I confess to him—my closest friend? Why if there is one thing that he despises more than another it is a Cad—and above all, a cad who would pretend to be a gentleman."

"Gerald, you must not!" She sprang to her feet. "You speak of your friend as he was. You forget what he is. Jem despises no one. He has learned the great lesson that there is nothing common and nothing unclean. You have seen him with the boys and with the outcasts of the doss house. Do you believe that the man who loves such as these would turn his back upon his old companion and friend? This is indeed the crime of *lèse-amitié*."

"Yes — yes. But still I cannot tell him. Helen, do you tell him—Say 'He is not, as he believed, one of an honourable House : he is the son of one Isaac Moorsom, who was the notorious

Rosenberg, the usurer of Golden Square, the man whose name has become a hissing and a proverb. He springs from the very lowest levels. He tried, being a coward, to hide the thing. He discovered in this very quarter cousins,—unexpected cousins—pauper cousins—docker cousins—slum cousins,—criminal cousins. There is not a man in the whole world who has ties that bind him to lower depths. Tell him that—in so many words.”

“I will tell him. And now, Gerald, we will have done with family revelations. The situation can remain in general terms. What will you do—if you propose to do anything?”

“I thought, first, that I would go abroad—to America—or somewhere, and break away from everything.”

“You cannot, unless you would become a hermit.”

“Even then, I should have to conceal things—to pretend.”

“Impossible.”

“Then I began to find other ways——”

“I thought you would, after a time.”

“First of all I shall resign my clubs. I shall give up calling on my old friends. If I ever go back to the world again, it must be as a self-made man.”

“You must do no such thing, Gerald ; for the

simple reason that what you propose is impossible. Part of your inheritance is that you can never call yourself a self-made man—son of your own works, as the French put it. Why, you have been endowed—by your father—with the education of a gentleman and a scholar: you have been placed—by your father—in a position to distinguish yourself: you have been enabled—by your father—to be called to the Bar: you are enriched—by your father—with the means of entering at once upon the career of your ambition: you owe all these things to your father as much as you owe your name and history. You can never be a self-made man. You have been trained and taught for any line of work that you choose to take up.”

“I don’t know. Perhaps. For the moment I am not thinking of my old ambitions. Other things seem to call me.”

“What other things?”

“Well,”—he tried to laugh—“as events have turned out, I cannot go away altogether—I have my own people here—those interesting cases—to look after. The respectable but incompetent Burkle: he must not slide back into another bankruptcy. The gallant young bruiser, my first cousin, may be capable of better things. Perhaps Jem may advise about him. The place seems full of Burkles and Bruisers.”

"Every street is full of them. You have found out so much—full of broken-down people, and impenitent people, and incompetent people, and drinking people, and these unfortunate young fellows who have nothing but their hands and their legs for all their trade. Oh! Gerald, you have found us out at last. Would you still leave them alone—to work out their full degradation—and sink—sink—sink—lower and lower still?"

"I look on them with changed eyes: they are my own people. Helen—I belong to them—they are my very own people."

"They are mine as well," said Helen. "We all belong to them and they to us. We rise from the Individual to the General. Every single man stands for Humanity: for the depths and the heights of Humanity: it was a MAN from the world invisible who stood, once for all, for Humanity Divine."

He took her hand and kissed it. "You live already in the heights" he said. "We look up from the depths. It is something even to understand the depths to which a man is capable of sinking." He released her hand and stood before her in silence for a brief space, as one deeply moved.

"Tell me, Helen," he murmured, "are you happy here? Do you never sigh for what you have given up? Do you desire nothing more

than this? It is your cloister, but you can leave it when you choose. Do you never wish for society—for—for love—for children?"

She answered him with frank, unclouded eyes—those womanly eyes which strengthen faith and inspire courage, eyes which could not be doubted. "My friend, I have all these things. My society is here in this house, and outside it. There are no people more cultivated, better bred or more sincere, than the people of the House; there are none more human than the people outside the house."

"And you never tire of them, or of your work: you never doubt?"

"I think—I believe—that I shall never tire and never doubt. How can I? They are my children: they are my lovers; they are my sisters: Gerald, they love me. Oh! the poor fond creatures—they are full of sin and suffering: but they love me. Can one ever tire of love?" Her voice broke, her eyes filled with tears.

"No, I understand at last. You will always be perfectly and entirely happy."

"After all it must not be a question of happiness. Yet we are so constituted that we always think of happiness. Heaven, with most of us, is a place where we shall always be happy. Yet, how can the souls of the Blessed Dead be happy while there are all those souls in pain? I do not

think it will be that kind of happiness at all." She spoke slowly and with hesitation, and her eyes looked out into space as if she was thinking aloud. "Not that kind. I mean, for all. There is another kind—it is when a man's thoughts are all given to the burdens and the weaknesses of others. Then his own cares, if he have any; his own ambitions; his own troubles—all drop from him and are forgotten."

"I was not thinking of such an escape."

"But you will find it. Already your troubles have become, in your imagination, what they really are—things of no account compared with the realities around you. Oh! Gerald—it is no new commandment—the law of Love." Her voice broke; her eyes filled. Then her voice changed: she came back to the world. "Ask yourself," she said, "what the work has done for the one member of our Settlement whom you knew before you came here."

"Jem Crozier? You have transformed him."

"He was formerly without responsibilities and without work. He lived for the day's amusement. Consider now, what he is."

"I have considered. He is changed indeed."

"Gerald, a week ago you asked what we could do for the poor. Ask now, what we can do for the rich."

He was silent for a space. Then he held out

his hand. "Do with me," he said, "what you can."

Helen held his hand. "It is not your money that we want," she said.

"You shall have none unless you ask for it."

"You know now," she still held his hand, "what we want. It is—yourself."

"Take me, then. Make me your servant."

"There was once a woman." She released his hand. She spoke again as one who felt the weight and meaning of her words. And while she spoke they stood face to face, and her eyes looked into his very soul and found it like unto the meadows after rain, and for him her voice was like the sunshine on the meadows after rain. "There was once a woman who brought an alabaster box very precious, which might have been sold for much and given to the poor. But she gave it to her Master. It was a symbol. For she gave—herself—to Him and for the poor. Oh! Gerald—she gave herself."

CHAPTER XX.

PICCADILLY.

GERALD stood in the dining room of his chambers and looked about him with an eye of purpose.

The walls were hung with family portraits. At the sight of that set face and relentless eyes, the portraits, one and all, quailed. There were some which had the property of following about the room everyone—it mattered not how many—who happened to be there : these portraits dropped their eyes with deprecating submission. For, you see, they knew, all of them that they were frauds : they were imposing false names upon the world with the view of bolstering up the pretences of an obscure family. Some of them had been painted—say without their own consent—for the purpose of pretence and falsehood. Now their hour was come : they were to disappear. Gerald went round the room taking them down one after the other : he did not slash them, or tear them from their frames or jump upon them. He took them down and laid them in a pile on their faces—which is the greatest ignominy which can be inflicted upon a portrait.

“Go !” he said, “Judge and Admiral : Jamaica conqueror and Bishop : Dean and Sergeant-at-Law : great-great-grandmother — Lady Mary : great-grandmother — Cecilia the musician—Go !—all of you. Get back to your picture dealer : go to illustrate another pretender’s pretences : create another imaginary family.”

He spoke aloud ; and in the silence of the room you might have heard the sighs of those

brazen pretences, his forefathers ; and the sobs of those dreadful old frauds, his grandmothers.

Two portraits remained. One represented a man in the dress of a dragoon : tall, handsome, coldly proud, distinguished : it was the portrait of the General, his grandfather, and painted exactly as he himself wished it to appear. Gerald hesitated before this picture. "You cannot," Helen had said, "present yourself to the world as a self-made man." His father had made that impossible in one way : his mother in another. "You sold your daughter," he said. But the Portrait showed no sign of repentance or of shame. He passed to a picture over the mantel-shelf : that of his mother : a handsome lady like her father, except for the pride. A serious face, more beautiful for the serious dignity which marked the pose and the expression with a touch, perhaps imaginary, of sadness and even resignation. Her son remembered her long silences in the silent house ; the lips that seldom smiled ; the soft sweet voice : the key of sadness in her music, in her reading, in her words : he thought of the quiet and retired life with no friends or visitors : cut off from her own family by the sins of her father, who "kept it up" so long, and her brother, who played his game so low : and married to a man who had no friends and no relations. He recalled her rare allusions to her own family and

their misfortunes : she told him of his ancestors, but she did not tell him why none of her cousins called upon her : and she never spoke of her husband's family at all. The son remembered, as well, the unfailing respect and attention which his father paid to her ; the deference to her wishes :—"She never regretted her marriage," he said, with satisfaction. "You never knew," said the son, looking into the face calm and serious. But as he looked, he perceived in the sadness of the eyes that, like the people in the slums whom he thought to be ignorant, she also knew—or knew at least, that she was wedded with a mate unworthy. Perhaps her father told her in the last days of dotage : perhaps her brother threatened her with demands for money. "You knew," he said. "Alas ! poor soul ! You knew—and you hoped that I should never know—and we all know—we all know : everybody knows."

He passed from the dining room to his study. The walls were lined with book-shelves and filled with books : on one side glass doors protected the more valuable books : the first editions : the *éditions de luxe* : the rare books : the old books : among them a single shelf—the shelf of honour—that in the line of sight, contained a row of volumes placed all together, although of unequal size, not "ranging" as booksellers say : they were bound in brown leather, dark with age, and rag-

ged at the corners and edges : they were black-letter books : sixteenth century books. He took them all down. On the inner cover of each was inscribed in letters, faded and pale, the words "Thomas Moorsom. Anno Domini, 1552." And below in ink somewhat less faded, the words, "My great great grandfather—Isaac Moorsom 1645." And below a third legend. "This book belonged to the Library of my ancestor Sir Thomas Moorsom, Puisne Judge under Queen Mary and to that of my great grandfather Isaac Moorsom, Esquire, M.P., of" one word unintelligible, "died 1662." And below in more modern ink, the signature "Isaac Moorsom" with a later addition "d. 1765." A brave bid for family honours ! Gerald laughed scornfully. With the aid of a penknife and a little patience he scratched out not only this inscription but a corresponding entry in every one of the black-letter books. Then he replaced them on the shelves. "Go !" he said. "You can tell no more lies."

Out of a drawer below the books he took a folded parchment. This was nothing less than a genealogy of the Moorsom family. It contained a most daringly untruthful list of names beginning in prehistoric times, in fact, before the arrival of the Conqueror with the thane named Leofstan. Gerald gave himself no time to read this precious

compilation. He ripped it and slashed it savagely with his penknife. Then he thrust it into the empty fireplace and applied a common lucifer match, looking on with a fiendish delight while it crackled and curled and miserably perished. "There is an end of another lie," he said.

There remained the family coat-of-arms. It was most beautifully drawn also on parchment. "Where is the coffin, for crest?" he asked. "Where are the blackamoor mutes for supporters? Where are the skulls and the thigh bones, argent, on a field sable?"

This, too, he slashed and ripped and threw into the fire. Afterwards he reflected upon the extraordinary care taken by his father to create and maintain a belief in the legend of ancestral honours. The genealogy—but anybody can invent a genealogy: it is easy to find an attachment somewhere, if one is so greatly daring as to tack a grandmother on one of these hanging chains of somebody's ancestors: it is also easy to find a coat-of-arms—you take that from somebody with a similar name. But to add an ancestral library, however small: a Tudor Library—with ancestral surnames of the 17th and 18th centuries: to place an ancestral shield within the books: this is a stroke of genius: to put up a gallery of portraits is also easy: anybody can do this: but to have books belonging to one or two of these pictures,

if you please, proves the genuine character of both books and pictures. Above all, there was no portrait of the real founder and creator of the illustrious family : he had passed away : those who remembered Tender-heart of Triangle Place or Sixty per cent of Golden Square could not gaze upon any likeness of Isaac Moorsom and identify it with these two well-remembered worthies because there was no likeness. And after all the trouble and care to keep the story dark, out it must all come.

What else? He looked about the room. Was there anything else at all that could suggest a claim to family honours and traditions. False books : lying genealogy : lying coat-of-arms : all were gone. Nothing was left except his seal engraved with his arms and mounted in gold. He took it from his watch chain : he forced the seal from the setting and put it in his pocket : "I cannot destroy you," he said, "but I can drop you down a drain. That will end you." He stretched out his arms. "So ! I have destroyed everything. I have no longer any ancestors : or any friends : or any coat-of-arms : any genealogy : I go back to the undertaker's shop in Triangle Place : one step more and I go back to the gutter and the kerb like the children in the streets."

"But," as Helen had said "you can never be a self-made man."

His servant opened the door. "A young man, sir," he said, "wants to see you particularly." The servant alone was a pretence. So respectable, so quiet, so well bred a servant, that he could not possibly belong to any but an ancient family. If it takes three generations to make a gentleman: it takes as many to make a gentleman's valet.

"What kind of young man?"

"Gives the name—I beg your pardon, sir—of George the Slogger—George the Slogger, I think he said."

"Well, I will see him."

It was none other. George appeared, cap in hand, somewhat breathless.

"It's like this," he said, "Miss Helen said you'd gone; Mr. Jem told me where to find you. So I've come."

"I am glad to see you. And why did you come?"

"It's only to ast that you won't go away altogether. It was a rare plucky thing to go for them boys as you did. Don't go away altogether. I've seen the boys. That little chap isn't going to die. And I've talked to them all proper. Mr. Jem himself couldn't talk better. You come back, and they won't go for you any more'n they'd go for Mr. Jem."

"I am thinking of going back, George. Have you seen your father lately?"

"I saw him last night."

"Did he tell you nothing?"

"He was drunk, and he talked wild till he couldn't talk no more. I dunno what he said, nor what he means."

"He is my uncle, George. That is partly what he means. You are, consequently, my first cousin."

George considered this communication as unimportant. "Well," he said, "he may be your uncle, or he may be your cousin. One fake more than another, don't matter much to him. This morning he's a bit sober and he means to give you beans, he says. He's got his paper and his pen, and he's writing letters. Don't give him nothing. He gets more than he wants. He only blows it with his pals."

"I shall give him nothing. My cousin, I am going to stay here for a bit—just to pull myself together and to discover a way—but you don't understand. Well—George—as for you, I am going to consult Mister Jem. Do you really want to be a bruiser?"

"There's big money in it, and the boys think ever so much of a champion."

"Well—you may be champion at the Club. Suppose something better for you could be found—if Mr Jem could find something better for you, you would like Glory to be respectable, wouldn't

you? and to have a house of your own outside the streets where the Hooligans fight and the women drink, wouldn't you?"

George stared and made no reply.

"Go now, George, I will see you again soon. And think of Glory and keep out of the public house."

Half an hour later a telegram arrived.

"Have seen Helen. Come back again. Come to-day. Jem."

To-day! He thought he was going to have a few weeks of meditation and preparation while the members of the Settlement recovered from the shock of the news and while he himself considered from every point of view, the great Renunciation. As the revelation of the truth and his own Renunciation were matters of such stupendous importance to himself he fondly imagined that they were of equal importance to everybody else. Yet to his closest friends—his friends from boyhood—the discovery of his true family history was a matter of as little astonishment and a good deal of pity: it made no kind of difference in their regard and affection for him: and it really seemed to them a matter of very small consequence as concerned his personal ambitions. The wings of men who rise are not clogged even though they spring from the mud and marsh of quack medicines or patent pills or a new depar-

ture in table salt or mustard ; though the wings were provided by the profits of an old sauce under a new name, or an old soap under a new name ; or any other. A man may rise by means of these things : when he has risen the people below may, and will, remember how the necessary funds were provided for the beginning. They may remember : they may whisper and laugh : but they cannot pull that man down.

There is another consideration which might have brought solace to this young man. He might have remembered that envy follows every man who rises : envy with detraction and spite and evil inventions : but where there are extenuating circumstances, such as the history of Isaac Moorsom's fortune, envy is disarmed because the people below seem to see the wings clogged and the flight heavy and the dizzy heights lowered. Still a third consideration might have presented itself : the fact that everybody is so entirely occupied with his own affairs that no one cares at all, in reality, about any other man, whether he rises or falls, whether he is sprung from kings or paupers ; from sinners or from saints.

Gerald looked round his rooms : perhaps for the last time. He no longer belonged to them or to the place. His windows commanded a view of that very fine street which is called Piccadilly. The street stands for the West End and all it

means. It is the full and flowing stream of the West End life. Up and down the street go statesmen and politicians : men of the services : men of the clubs : great ladies and fair ladies : painted ladies and the strange woman : the Gilded Youth who would make themselves separate and apart—another people and another race : the brass pot and the earthen pot : and among them all, like the skeleton at the feast, the sandwich man who winds his serpentine way in silence and in sadness, who was once among those who marched triumphant along the way of Joy.

His place was no longer in that stream : as he stood at the window looking down, behold ! the broad street vanished. In its place he saw the dingy tenements : and the Settlement in the midst, a garden of sweet flowers and fragrant herbs, an orchard of fruit : and he saw himself standing beside the woman who, like Mary sister of Lazarus, had made an offering of alabaster box. "Behold !" she seemed to say "Here is the true humanity ; that works and suffers and endures : you cannot find it in Piccadilly, where they toil not, neither do they spin : and where they take no thought, save for the rapture of the passing moment." He listened : the words were but his thoughts, though they seemed to be the words of Helen. His own true life was there—among his own people—the people he had discovered : a-

mong the multitudinous mass to whom he belonged by right of birth. The old shames vanished, they became like ghosts who disappear at the breaking of the day : why had he been afraid of ghosts?

“To-day !” He was summoned to return at once. Well, of course—the people of the Settlement were well bred : they would not point fingers at him : they would not cry, “How about Golden Square?” or, “What about the model and the mutes?” Yet—on the very day of discovery——

He called his man. “Take those pictures away” he said. “I have discovered that they are not genuine. You can do what you please with them.”

He looked at his watch. The dinner hour of the Settlement was half-past six : there was time : he would be back for dinner. In a hansom cab, and in quite the best modern way, Gerald effected the great Renunciation.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CHAPTER.

A MEETING, or Chapter, of all the members of the Settlement was an event of a rare kind. It

was convened as a rule only when the Warden wished to consult with everybody on the report of the year, or to suggest some new departure.

On this occasion, they were summoned on special business, and it was said to be confidential and immediate. They were called for half-past five, an hour before dinner.

They flocked in, and threw themselves about in chairs. The Chapter was always informal. Helen came in last and took up her position as Warden, and therefore president of the Chapter, standing before the fireplace.

She said that she had been requested to call them together, in order to make a communication which she herself regarded as unimportant, save as concerning the self-respect and the conscience of the person concerned.

She then proceeded to present a brief sketch of the facts which we know, dwelling particularly on the complete ignorance of the family history in which the boy had been brought up : on falsehoods with which he was fed concerning shadowy family distinctions and imaginary ancestors, so that pride of birth and a certain aristocratic pity or kindly contempt for those who are not of gentle lineage became a part of himself : how he was sent to a school, where this kind of contempt or pity is considered natural to one in the position of a gentleman : how he formed

friendships of the closest kind with young men of social standing similar to his own : how he succeeded both at school and at the University and was encouraged to form ambitions natural to one who began life with the very great advantages of birth and fortune as well as good abilities : and how, without the least preparation, or cause for suspicion, he learned the truth. She went on to explain the nature and the full meaning of the truth. She then showed how for a time the young man's better nature had been corrupted by the shame and pain of this knowledge : the destruction of the respect in which he had always held his father : the terror with which he contemplated the discovery by the world : and the intolerable burden, for a man of honour, of going about under false pretences. "It was," she said, "while under this burden, while still feeling the humiliation of the truth : while still endeavouring to adapt himself to his new conditions : and while still attempting the impossible task of combining the life and character of a man of honour with the false pretences forced upon him against his knowledge, that our friend Gerald Moorsom came to us—for a brief stay."

"He came, in the bitterness of his heart, full of prejudice : he could believe nothing good of the people among whom we work : he would believe nothing good of our work. We may

understand that he had been prejudiced and embittered against our folk by the history of his father, trying, instinctively, to justify him. Because his father had risen by trampling on the weak and trading on necessity, he assumed that it is the rule in our social structure that the weak should be everywhere trampled down, and that the necessitous are everywhere plundered and stripped. People, he said, in every class are all the same. The strong man oppresses the weak man, and so on. Most of you have heard this kind of talk from him. Now you understand why he talked in this way.

“On the first morning after his arrival I told him that his face, his voice, his eyes, proclaimed one kind of man, and his words another : it seemed to me that there was within him a war of the Worse against the better. This was so. And the better has triumphed over the worse.

“We call it a coincidence that he should have been led to the very place where his father was born and where he began a remarkable career of hard hearted determination to be rich. We may call it whatever we please, but we must acknowledge that by this coincidence, he has been restored to his right mind. First and foremost, he will have no further concealment. He bade me tell you all, without hiding any single point, who he is and what is his history. I have told you.

“He wandered about among the streets with the blind eyes of one who has no sympathy with humanity because his heart was full of himself. He saw nothing : not even the things that seem to strike the most casual visitor. The public-house opened its doors and the boys and girls came reeling out, but he saw nothing, because he cared nothing. Presently, in spite of himself, he found a case which interested him : then another : and another : he was bound to consider them, because the persons concerned were his own near relations. You have heard what he has done in these cases. He has risen by these means through the individual to the general. He no longer lumps together the whole mass : he discerns faces and separates persons among them : he has found his duty in the cases which he knows, and he recognizes the wider duty towards those which he knows not.

“I do not know what he will do in the future. He is young : he is rich—at present he is disposed to despise the power of wealth : he is a scholar : he has great abilities : he has the heart and the instincts—I use the word advisedly—of a gentleman. What will he do? I cannot say. He will, however, come here for a time. He will come prepared to work with us. Whatever he does for our people they will return a hundredfold to him. If he goes into the arena of

politics and action he will enter it as one strengthened by contact with mother earth. If he becomes a leader of the people it will be because he has sprung from the people and because he knows them : and he will bring to his career as well the readiness of the aristocrat to take a place of authority. But perhaps he will stay here."

She ceased, and there was silence for a while. Then he who was the people's lawyer lifted his head and spoke. " Part of your story I knew already, namely, the identity of this man's father with the usurer of Golden Square. I learned the facts from certain papers in our office. Isaac Moorsom was not a client of ours, so that I am not breaking confidence. It is, however, absurd to suppose that a man of that wealth can effectually conceal his identity or his name, or the manner in which he made his money. It was nobody's business to prove this identity and therefore it was not inquired into. I knew who Gerald Moorsom was as soon as I heard his name and where he came from. And I confess that I regarded him with distrust, as one who pretended or seemed to pretend to be—what he certainly was not—a gentleman of an old and honourable family."

And the woman called Janet spoke. " I, too, have known the thing, or suspected it, but only

for two or three days. I heard from people named Burkle, whom Mr. Moorsom befriended, that he was the very image of Isaac Moorsom, and that they believed him to be his son. But I knew nothing about the Golden Square part of it. I am glad that he has told us. It would have been horrid to find out all these things and to suspect that he knew them and was concealing them."

"I knew as well," said Jem. "That is, I knew the Golden Square part of the story, because the begging-letter writer the—Impenitent one—told me the other day, in the spirit which one would expect of him. He proposed that I should assist him to black-mail Gerald. Now I was quite certain—because, you see, I have known Gerald all my life, pretty well—that he must have been brought up in ignorance of the thing. And when he found it out, of course he was disgusted, which made him talk unlike himself. You will see, all of you, when he comes back, what a man he is."

"I, too, knew something," said Helen. "And I, too, was persuaded that he had learned the truth quite recently."

"And I," said Beatrice, "heard something about it from Glory. She saw her future father-in-law this morning. He raves of revenge against Mr. Moorsom, whom he calls an ungrateful nephew."

"Since so many knew," said Helen, "and since it matters nothing to us, except that one may be sorry for a young man who has to give up so much that he valued, I suppose that we may decide to receive him without any reference to his communication. It is a thing which needs no answer."

"After all," said the lawyer, "he is only beginning a family. Most of us cannot go back very far. My family begins with my father. I go back one generation."

"Mine," said Jem, "goes back three generations."

"Mine," said Beatrice, "two."

"As for mine," said Janet resolutely, "I am thinking of beginning it myself."

"He will not, I hope," said the lawyer, "bring any of his precious money down here."

"No. The possessions which might have been sold and given to the poor, he reserves for some other purpose. As yet he knows not what to do with them. For the present he leaves them behind him. And he gives—to this work—himself."

"I telegraphed to him this afternoon," said Jem. "I knew what you would all say."

The Dinner Bell rang. The door was thrown open. The man of whom they spoke stood before them.

"Ha!" said Jem, "I knew you couldn't keep away."

"There is the Dinner Bell." Helen took Gerald's arm and pressed it gently. "Let us all go in."

* * * *

The door closes : the stage is deserted : the curtain falls.

It is not the whole of a man's life that we have seen : from the outside view, not the most important part : to himself it means everything. He has passed through the nameless Valley, worse than that of Humiliation, in which the pilgrim is assailed by bodiless shapes and hears voices that threaten and voices that tempt. In this Valley the man is alone : as in a labyrinth of mirrors he sees nothing but himself.

You have seen how he has been dragged out of this Valley by finding what is real : how he has lost sight of himself.

What will follow? I know not. Love for certain, because he is a man. Friendship for certain, because he will work with others and for others. Success, I think, because he is a strong man, though not perhaps the success he once desired. He may stay where we have left him, content with obscurity : or he may return to the world, to be a Leader of the folk to whom he belongs, for whom he has worked.

